AUSTRALIA'S MOST POPULAR SELF-SUFFICIENCY MAGAZINE

# Grass Roots

AUST **$5.95** incl GST
New Zealand $7.15 incl GST
No **167** Feb/March 2005
Printed on plantation-grown paper

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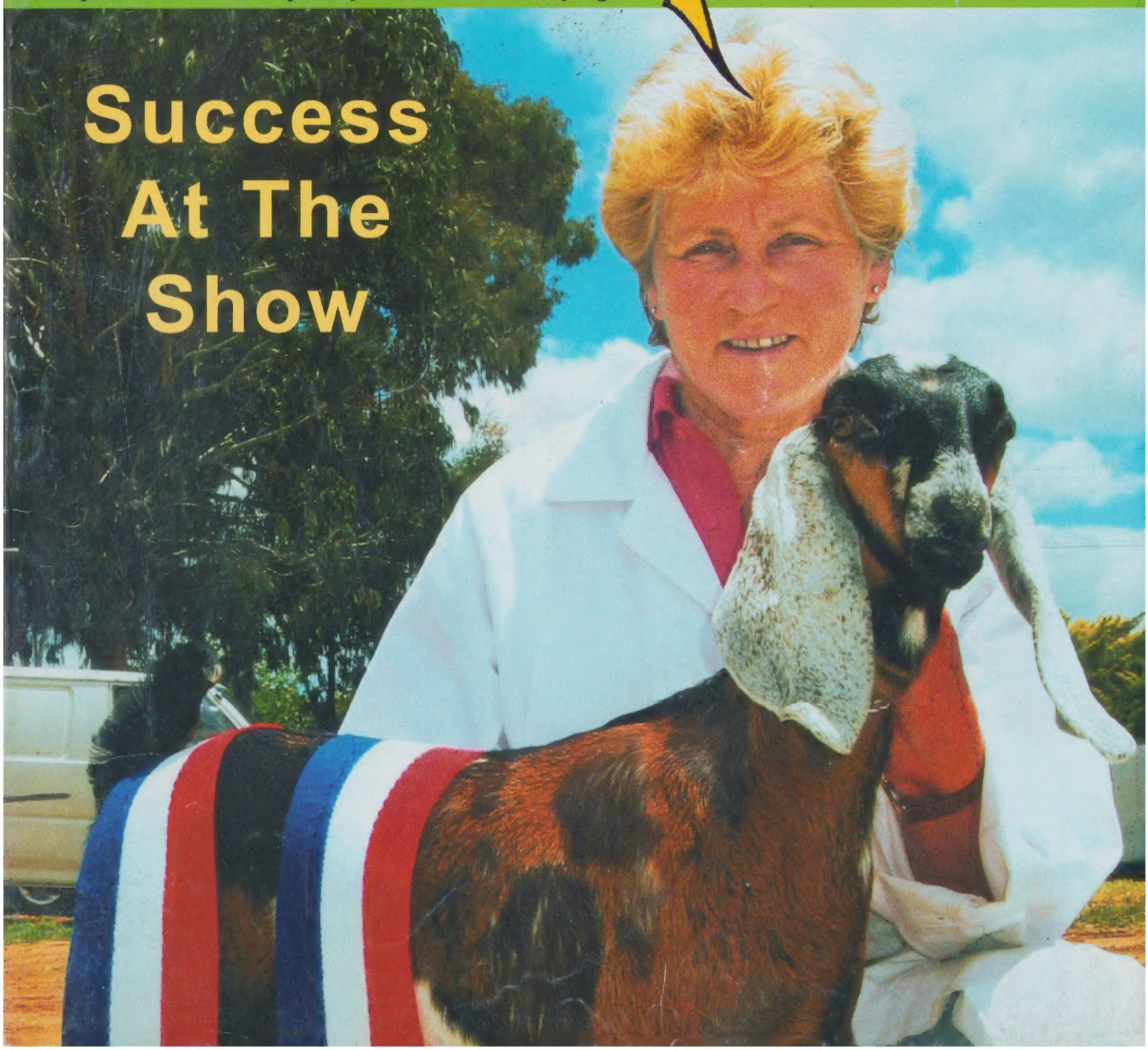

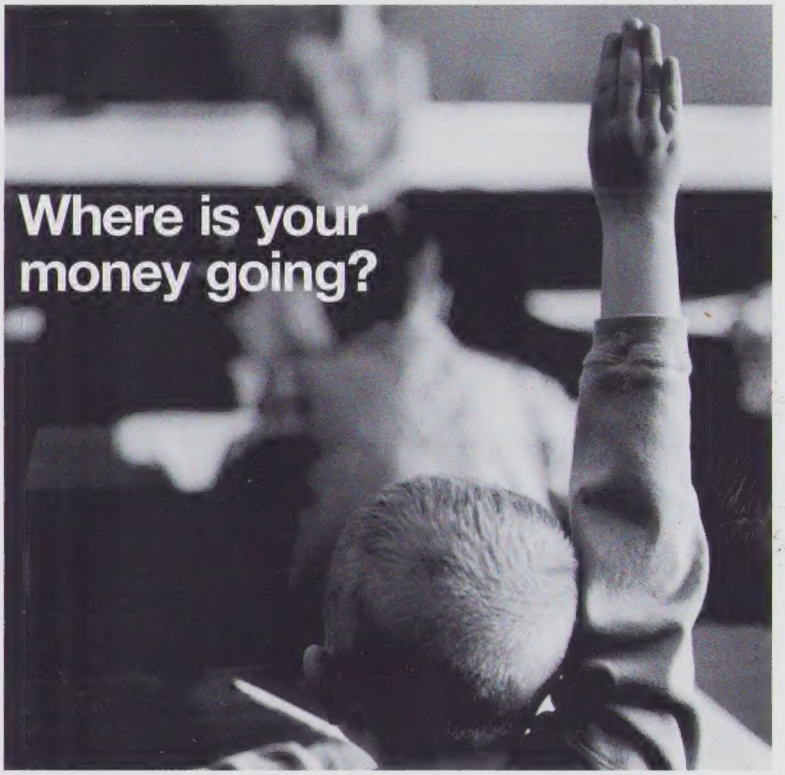


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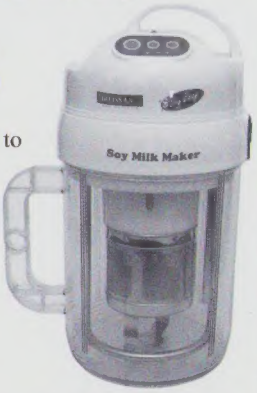


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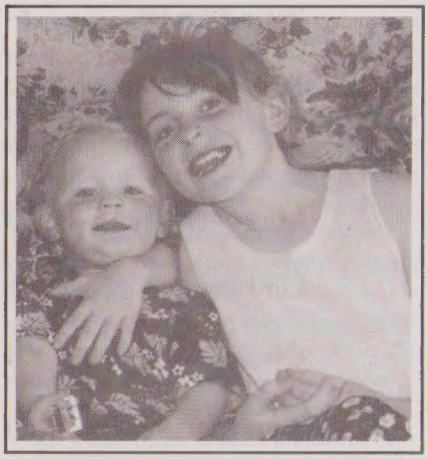

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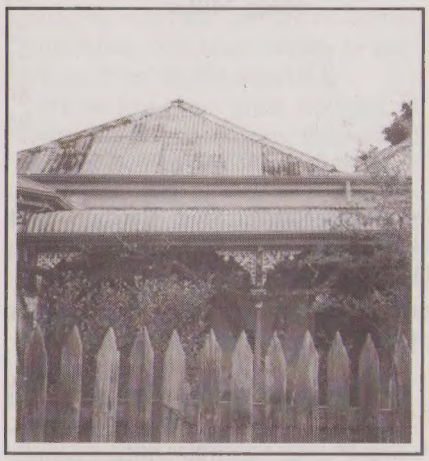

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## COVER PHOTOS

**Front Cover:** Jenny Jones of Illoura Park Anglo Nubian Stud, Berrima, at the Queanbeyan Show with her champion doe kid, Illoura Park Caitlin. See lots of tips for fun, successful showing on pages 9 – 11. Photo courtesy *The Land*.

**Back Cover:** This house doesn't need our tips on mending rusty roofs, but you might. Read about the process on page 34. Photo by Suni Miller.


Edited by Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall.

Published by Grass Roots Publishing Pty Ltd, Box 117, Seymour 3661. Ph: 03-5792-4000, fax: 03-5792-4222. For classifieds see page 75.



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# GUMNUT GOSSIP

by Megg Miller.

The first week of 2005; if it had crawled by any slower we would have been comatose at our desks. Embracing the transition from lazing in deck chairs nibbling chocolate to the full-on demands of an imminent GR deadline was challenging to say the least. There's been much sighing and yawning each afternoon and grateful gulping of coffee. Having said all this, I know our GR team are refreshed from their Christmas break and glad to be in the office and away from the temptation of long lunches and rich afternoon teas. What we do miss is the opportunity for that decadent four o'clock snooze.

Proof that everyone's pistons are firing fully occurred just days after starting back. 'Your desk', they said, ganging up, 'is the source of all items misplaced or lost around here'. If ever I heard a disgraceful exaggeration, it's that. It is a mite untidy, and things do disappear in the levels of paperwork, but they usually reappear. I regard it as a source of unknown riches because no one ever knows what will surface next. Sue and Suni are miffed because the occasional scissors or stapler get caught up and Mary is still haunted by some lost pages of magazine copy she was dementedly searching for last issue, which somehow turned up in my papers. I'm not convinced I'll turn into a better person if I do adopt a New Year's resolution of keeping my workplace tidy. At best, it would all go under the table and into boxes, so it's probably easier to have everything spread around so everyone can see it. As Sue commented, 'We know where to start looking if we've lost something'.

We've had some great feedback in recent months on articles featured in GR. Our eco baby contributions have touched the spot; as well as young parents expressing appreciation, we've had older readers saying the articles have brought back memories of a very special time. We're sure almost all the young people we know are having babies: friends, relatives, neighbours, even a member of the book club Mary and I attend is in baby mode. We keep in contact with Sabrina, our former colleague, who is doing a wonderful job of raising little Marcus and helps us out with some of the pages of GR. As well, my chook magazine assistant Noreen, who works a couple of days a week here alongside the GR team, is over the moon about a gorgeous grandchild born just before Christmas. Instead of musing over those memories, what about sharing some tried and tested tips for managing colic, cradle cap or nappy rash? We'd love to hear from you.

If you're loath to give away some of the lovely Christmas cards you received but don't want them languishing in a drawer, try the decoupage Jose Robinson demystifies this issue. Years ago Mary tried her hand at adapting this craft and made a lovely box decorated with flowers and farm animals for me. I still use it and offered a photo to accompany Jose's text. It's a craft you can really go to town over. Might be fun to plan some little boxes for Easter.

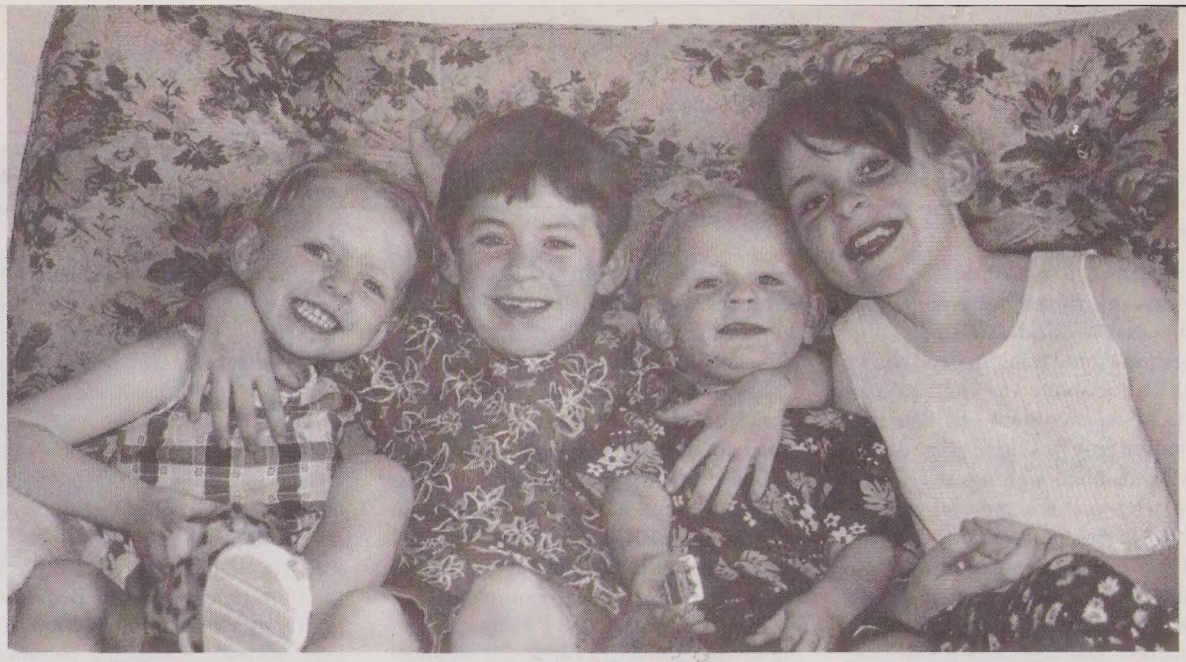
We were thrilled to hear from readers Judy and Jeff Smith how articles in GR helped them start off with sheep. One heritage breed sounded perfect for their situation and they followed it up and are now proud Shropshire breeders. It's immensely satisfying playing a part in helping ideas and plans become realities. Well done folk, and hats off to the stud breeders who were so generous with time and advice.

Before Christmas we mailed off lots of acknowledgment notes for gift subscriptions and would like to welcome new readers to GR. I can't think of a better gift than a magazine subscription because the pleasure and excitement are not over with the initial gift opening, but occur intermittently throughout the year. I hope we'll receive lots of interesting articles and descriptions of owner-built houses and sustainable gardens and orchards from our new readers.

Sandy Kelly isn't a new reader, she's been with us for years and years, and cheered us all with her colourful presence on the back cover of GR 157. We received a note in lieu of a card in late November outlining her year, and it was so inspiring we felt we should share it with you. Sandy is a health coordinator at a small isolated community on Cape York Peninsula, a job that offered a two-year tenure. She works with dedicated staff who have grown up in the community and felt just as proud as they did when they passed first aid and received their first-ever certificates.

Services in remote areas have a lot more to contend with than our coworkers in the cities, Sandy tells us: a long wet season, being cut off from transport for months on end and isolation from family and friends. Sandy and workers give domestic assistance, personal care, transport, meals and day respite care to members of the community. It sounds a complex, demanding job, but very rewarding too. One way of unwinding for Sandy is gardening. She has one of only three gardens in the town and with water in good supply has been able to create a beautiful oasis. As well, she has enjoyed raising a baby wallaby orphaned in a road accident and eagerly awaits its successful release into the wild from a Kuranda wildlife refuge. So, despite the isolation and the very different lifestyle, Sandy lives a pretty Grass Rootsy life.

It's erroneous to think there is a single type of reader or just one way of doing things. We're diverse and as different as chalk and cheese, and doesn't that very fact make the magazine richer and more interesting to read. Nevin Sweeney, a regular contributor, gains all his experience and knowledge in a suburban backyard, whereas Jose Robinson has been the archetypal adventurer and lived on a boat and an island before taking up the challenge of being a landlubber. Sue our receptionist lives in the bush without mains electricity, Suni loves the cosmopolitan inner city lifestyle, Mary has successfully moved from a rural block to country town living and adores it, and I like to see crops and livestock from my verandah. We're all biased about home, but Sandy Kelly sums it up best. 'Looking out of my window and thinking you wouldn't want to be anywhere else at this point in time than in this beautiful part of the world. Home is where the heart is.'



# Productive Suburban Lifestyle

by Julie Johnson, Stanford Merthyr, NSW.

On a day in autumn a quick trip out to feed the chickens results in four eggs, while a wander around the vegie garden yields five tomatoes, a handful of little grape tomatoes, a capsicum, a cucumber and half an ice cream container of beans (since yesterday's container full). Life on a suburban quarter-acre can be fulfilling and productive.

## FRUIT GALORE

The fig tree is loaded, as are both apple trees. The feijoa is about to burst into flower and the newly planted apricot is showing strong growth. We also have orange, lemon, lemonade, mandarin and grapefruit, which are all bearing, a loquat, three passionfruit vines, a fully loaded pomegranate, a pawpaw, a tamarillo, two mulberries, a newly planted rosella, a lilly-pilly, a custard apple, a pepino, and a couple of old plum trees as well as a new Japanese one. A mango and an olive are thriving in pots; there are strawberries growing in wall planters and another three figs in pots that I propagated from last year's prunings.

## MEALS FROM THE GARDEN

I can usually find at least one thing from the garden for each meal. In April we were eating beans, potatoes, lettuce, carrot, radish, cucumber, capsicum, more beans, basil, corn and strawberries from our own garden. I had just planted broccoli, peas and cabbage to harvest later in the year. I also had hebe and rose cuttings growing in the vegie garden as this was the only space available at the time. In addition, there was the essential rambling choko vine over the chook pen. We experimented and grew some potatoes in old 22-litre buckets (my husband is a plasterer so we have a good supply of buckets) and had a better yield than in the garden.

## MOON PLANTING

I plant everything according to the moon and have never experienced better growth or germination. Basically, crops can be divided into above and below ground crops and these are planted according to the moon's phases and the zodiac signs. Above ground crops (including lettuces, beans, caulies) are sown or transplanted in the moon's waxing period, that is, between the new moon and the full moon. Below ground crops (including carrots, potatoes, onions) are best sown in the waning period, that is, between the full moon and the new moon. Noting whether the zodiac signs are barren or fertile will give you the exact time to plant during the moon's correct phase. An *Astrological Guide and Moon Planting Calendar* can be purchased, however, I find it easier to follow the guides published every month in some magazines.

## PROPAGATION

The greenhouse is usually full of vegie seedlings and cuttings. As I write there are also in the greenhouse two lychees and about a dozen pawpaws propagated from seed of a fruit that tasted delicious. I usually plant a six-cell punnet or a double row of various vegie seeds every month to give a continuous supply.

### Growing From Seed

I grow most of my vegies from seed, either saved from my own garden or from open-pollinated seeds bought from Eden, Phoenix or New Gippsland seeds. I have a heat pad used for home brewing, which I use in the winter to start seeds off early. I use this in conjunction with a mini plastic greenhouse. When the seeds are up I transfer them to an unheated mini greenhouse. This setup is situated on my front verandah, which gets winter

sun most of the day. They are then transferred to the shadehouse about two weeks prior to planting out to allow them to gradually adapt to outside conditions.

### Growing From Cuttings

The figs I grew by planting 20-centimetre cuttings in a shady part of the vegie garden where they grew quite happily. Normally, I take cuttings of a plant when I am pruning and these get put in pots and placed in a polystyrene box covered with clear plastic. This is kept moist and out of direct sunlight. Once they start to show growth they are transferred to the greenhouse until established enough to plant out. They are watered with weak seaweed spray every couple of days. If I have the time I dip the ends of the cuttings in honey before potting, otherwise I don't worry about it at all. I usually plant enough cuttings so I get at least a few to strike as I don't really worry about what time of year the cuttings should be taken.

## MULCHING AND FERTILISING

All the gardens are mulched with sugar cane mulch and fertilised with worm castings, mushroom compost and chook manure. All the vegies and fruit trees get a foliar spray with liquid seaweed every few weeks or whenever I have time or remember. This is only done after about 5pm or very early morning because tiny openings (like pores) on a plant's leaves called 'stomata' close up during the middle of the day. By spraying once the heat of the sun is gone, the plants are able to take in the nutrients through the opened stomata. I don't have access to seaweed so I have to use the commercially available seaweed extract.

## WATERING

The whole garden is watered by a sprinkler system, which I hope will soon be attached to a timer, as I don't have time to walk around and water by hand. I am able to water the various areas of the garden by moving the hose every 20 minutes or so and still be getting the family organised. I only water in the mornings as I have found that nightly watering encourages moulds and mildews on the vegies.

## INCORPORATING ANIMALS

We have seven chickens, pigeons, a cat, a budgie, three dogs and a rabbit. The rabbit eats the grass and saves on mowing. The chooks receive all garden and house scraps, mixed grains and a hot mash of oats, wheat and bran on cold mornings. I don't have a compost heap as the chooks do it all for me. The dogs are fed chicken mince or lamb cooked with vegies and rice, with a little sulphur added to keep away fleas.

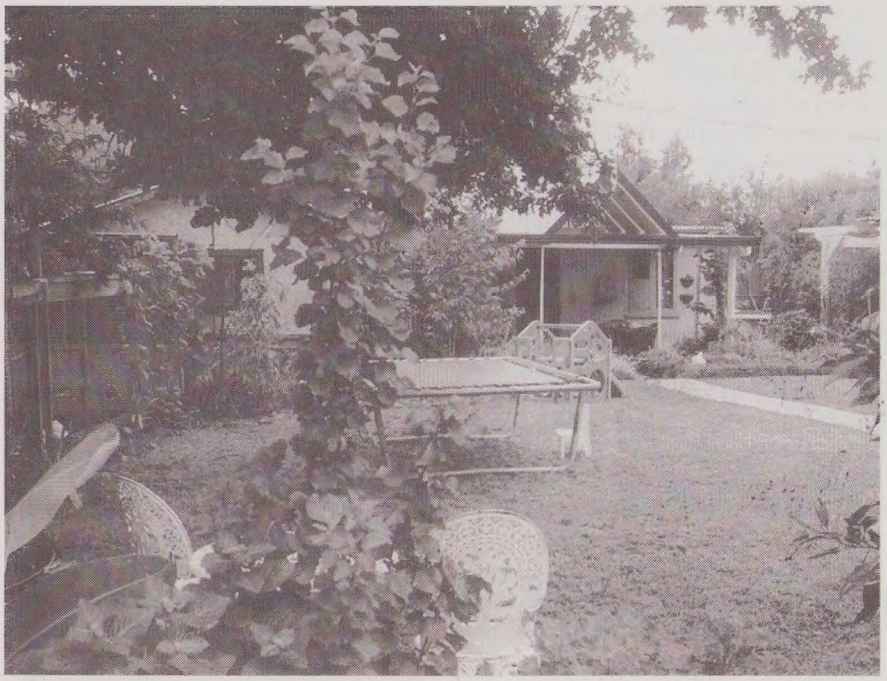
## LIFESTYLE

We have managed to do all this on a quarter-acre block that was almost completely bare six years ago. All our fruit trees are planted amongst natives and cottage plants like roses, lavenders, daisies and similar. There is a large grassed area, a sandpit and a small swimming pool. All the paths in the vegie garden are concrete as I believe a productive garden need not be a messy garden and it is much easier to maintain.

During this time we have also renovated the inside of the house, including a beautiful timber kitchen my husband built from scratch, as well as raising four beautiful, happy, healthy children. The two eldest go to great small schools and our preschooler goes to the same preschool I did when I was her age. Our baby is three already. They all love being outdoors and helping in the garden. I have been a vegetarian for the last 10 years, including during all four pregnancies.

We would all love to move to a larger property, but I don't think things would be much different except I would have further to walk in the

Make the most of where you are; a suburban backyard can be highly productive.



A fruitful garden, but there's still space for the children to play.

garden and we would have horses and possibly a cow. It is important to keep your dreams alive, but to also consider the practicalities and realities of your present situation. My husband currently works long hours and most weekends, so what we already have is probably about all we can manage at the moment.

To all those people dreaming away in suburbia, don't be disillusioned, it can be done right where you are.

**POSTSCRIPT**

It's now September. Since writing the above in April, we have had a very mild, dry winter, but still managed to have a productive vegie garden. Successive plantings resulted in us enjoying lettuce, peas, carrots, silverbeet, spinach, broccoli and turnips almost every day. The loquat has its first crop turning golden and the deciduous trees are starting to get their new leaves. The kids are still healthy, although our youngest has been diagnosed with a moderate hearing loss and now has hearing aids. The change in him is amazing as he couldn't even hear birds before.

We have also installed a rainwater tank to water the vegies. Unfortunately, to date, the water has only just reached the level of the tap, but every little bit counts in the long run. The chooks went down to giving two eggs a day but are now back up to five or six a day. All the summer vegies are in the greenhouse waiting for danger of frost to pass and I have already planted out corn and bean seeds. Everything is humming along nicely, now all we need is a bit more rain.

Anyone interested in writing, please do, care of *Grass Roots*. I also love reading, cooking and writing letters.

## Banana Oat Waffles

I have included a lovely waffle recipe which my family adores. It is a great way to get the kids to eat bananas and oats.

¾ cup rolled oats
⅔ cup plain flour (half wholemeal)
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp bicarb soda
2 eggs
¾ cup milk
2 tbsp oil
1 tsp vanilla essence
1 mashed ripe banana

Preheat waffle iron. Mix together oats, flour, baking powder and bicarb in a bowl. In a jug whisk eggs, milk, oil and vanilla, add banana and stir to combine. Pour into the flour mixture and whisk until just smooth. Pour half cup batter into waffle iron and cook 4 – 5 minutes. We serve ours with ice cream or yoghurt and maple syrup. Makes 5. Enjoy.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# Have A Go In The Show

by Annette Shaw, Lardners Track, Vic.

I had such good fun recently entering the Warragul Show and crowing about my winning first prizes. I would recommend anyone thinking of exhibiting something in their local show to do so. At last year's show I decided that I could outdo any number of the flower, cake and jam exhibits and would put some entries in next time.

When my husband and I bought a house several years ago, it came with a fabulous garden that I adore, but as I didn't plant it myself I don't know the particular varieties of many of the plants. When I got my show entry form I realised there were 25 different types of dahlias and I didn't know any. I dug out the *Encyclopedia Botanica*, which was of no help whatsoever. There were two red spiky dahlias on one page that were two distinct varieties and I couldn't tell the difference between them at all. I was appalled at my dahlia ignorance. I decided to give dahlias a miss.

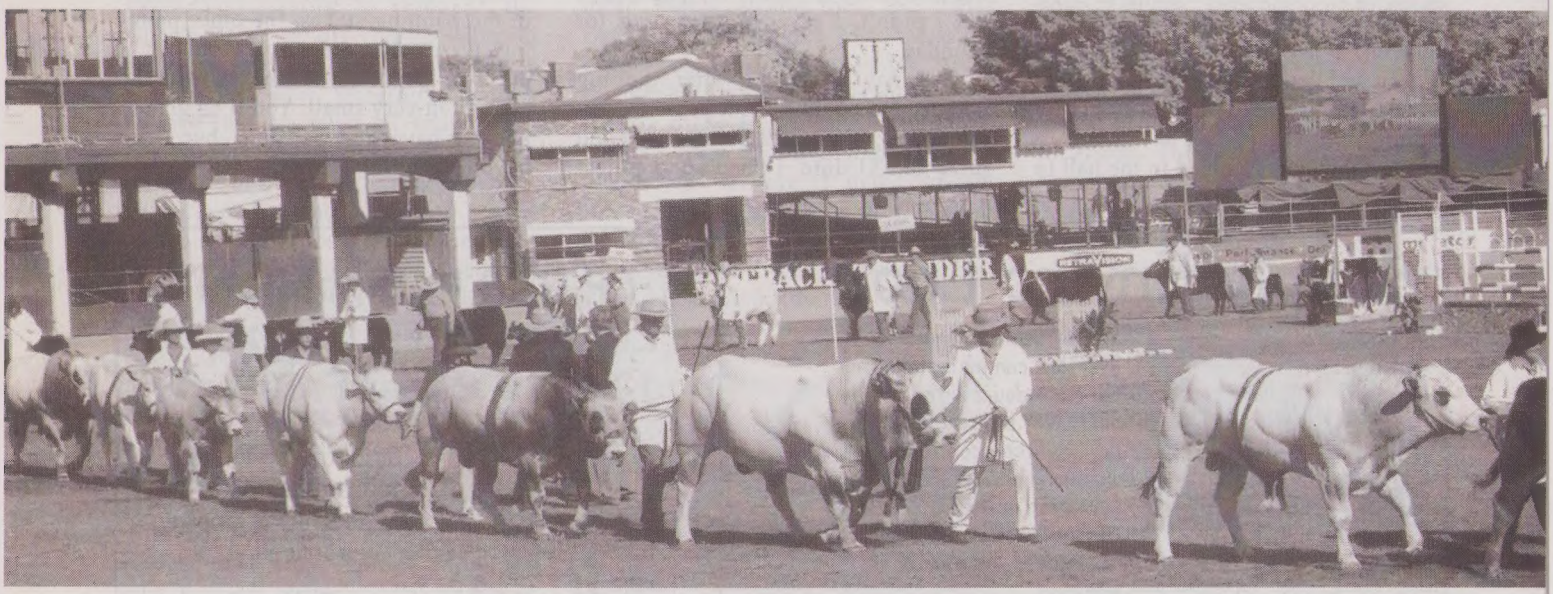
Fruit cake would be a good one; I had just the recipe. I made the cake and managed to burn the top edge just enough to have to give that a miss too. We all loved eating the cake, so that was a winner anyway.

What else could I do? I had just finished a small painting that I had been agonising over: a little portrait of a middle-aged woman sitting on a sandstone step shelling scallops. It looked perfect for the show, so I decided to enter that one.

What else? Marmalade. I come from a family of serious jam makers. My mother made jam every summer of her adult life. I know about jam. I decided to put my plum and mulberry in and make a set of three marmalades, labelled. I chose home-grown orange, lemon and grapefruit. I spent hours drawing fruit on my labels. The weather was pretty warm and it's hot work tending to pots of boiling fruit and sugar. I made orange and grapefruit and they were great; well set, with good clean colour and good flavour. The lemon one tasted sensational, but was a little runny. Two days before the show, with the late summer sun frying us all, no way could I finish the marmalade. I had to give that a miss too.

Lemons. I grow hundreds, so I picked about 40 in an attempt to find four perfect middle-sized lemons. I washed the four best and hoped they would do.

I concentrated on my last exhibit, a collection of 6 – 12 home-grown vegetables. My zucchinis were surprisingly tiny. Oh well, I picked them anyway. Button squash were pretty small too. My giant tomatoes were still a week away and all I had was a handful of Tiny Tim tomatoes, so I picked them. The purple runner beans that I put in late had just enough perfect beans. The baby Muma Mia capsicums and five chillies didn't exactly take up a lot of space. The eggplants were a bit baby sized too. Oh well, they matched the rest. I pulled a few baby leeks to complete my collection and put it all together in a basket. It looked small. Oh well.



Friday was show entry morning and I had an attack of the nerves. I almost didn't put anything in, but what the heck! On entering my exhibits in the hall, I saw I had fantastic lemons compared to the opposition. My confidence soared. I went to find the numbered space for my vegie collection. Either side of my display there were collections of enormous, perfect vegetables.

There seemed to be a lot of white paper showing in my space. The mini vegies looked smaller than ever. I handed my jam to the steward and popped my painting entry in.

On show day I hurried to the hall to see how I went. First prize for lemons. Wow! I was so excited. I walked up the aisle to see how my jam went. There it was, with a bit taken out and no prize. That plum and mulberry was seriously good! It became apparent that V Vale had taken out 25 first prizes for exquisitely presented jams and marmalades. I cruised on to the cakes. Mrs Balfour had been cooking up a storm and seemed to have as many first prizes as V Vale. I noticed that my fruit cake would have won hands down though. Next year. I checked out the vegetables. There was first prize to the right and second prize to the left of my display, making my vegies look particularly puny. I went to find my painting and couldn't spot it anywhere, then there it was as a side display, with a first prize attached. Well, I was just thrilled. I wanted to stop people walking past and say 'that's my painting!', but I didn't. I saved my boasting for Monday.

Saturday afternoon, after the big parade, we could collect prize money in the hall: $3 for first prize, $2 second prize and $1 third. I lined up to collect my $6. The woman in front of me was handed $50. That's a lot of $3 prizes. I found myself saying, 'Wow you must be V Vale!' 'No', she replied, 'I'm Mrs Balfour'. 'The cake lady', I said. 'Yes, goodbye', she said. I nearly said 'I'll give you a run for your money next year!', but decided not to give the game away. I collected my winnings and spent the money on a plant, to remind me of my happy day.

Monday afternoon I picked up my first prize for lemons certificate and headed for Zorro's Produce Shed where I buy our vegetables. I got out of the car and waved the certificate, saying 'You may grow the best vegies, but I have the best lemons in the district!' Ornella ooed and ahed and made a fuss of me, then asked if I had any other prizes. 'Yes, I got a first for a little painting I did. I only put it in the show because there was no real competition in the painting stakes, the other paintings were pretty ordinary', I told her. 'I put two paintings in the show', she said. I felt very small. You'll be glad to know I have quit boasting, but I did have fun with the show.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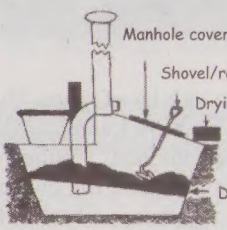


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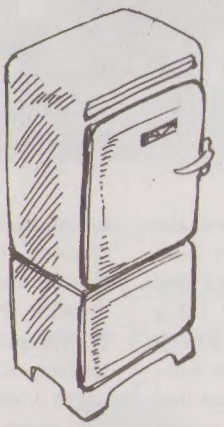

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# A Consuming Hobby

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

'I get a great deal of satisfaction from exhibiting my goats, though I regard myself as a relative newcomer', says Jenny Jones, pictured on our cover with one of the goatlings she has bred.

'Showing is a great yardstick as to where you stand compared with peers in the same field and the liaison and communication with other breeders is a very valuable learning source – saves you having to reinvent the wheel! Being involved with showing has brought many new friendships within the goat fraternity. I also believe that we must all support the local agricultural shows; they're a vital part of community life, especially in country towns.'

Jenny has a 50-acre property at Berrima, in the Southern Tablelands, where she breeds stud Anglo Nubians and Boer goats. Previously, she had been heavily involved with polocrosse, breeding Australian stock horses for this sport as well as for working. After many years with these she changed to dressage and then discovered goats. 'There was no time for anything else after that', she said.

Just four stock horses enjoy the rich Berrima pastures now, and they belong to Jenny's youngest son and his partner. Goats dominate the rest of the property. Recognising the potential in Boers and their suitability for small farms, Jenny purchased breeding stock from a health-accredited local stud that was known for its excellent genetics. Keen to maximise the quality of animals, she decided on embryo transfer and looked for Anglo Nubians to produce crossbred recipients for the program.

'I wanted the dairy influence in recipients for better milk production to grow the kids and liked the notion that the Nubians had a higher butterfat content in their milk than did the Swiss breeds. Kids on such rich milk would grow quickly and be on their mothers for a shorter time (quality rather than quantity) and I could dry the does off and give them a spell for a couple of months before it all started again.

'Well, of course I fell in love with the Nubians; they have a personality in their own right. They're said to be more highly strung than the Swiss types, but I don't agree. My foundation does were amazingly adaptable, given that I knew very little about goats when I drove off to Queensland to purchase 20 does from a leading stud when the owner was retiring. I made several four-day round trips with the float loaded up with does and kids, including some little more than a week old. They all survived the trip and flourished', said Jenny.

## The Anglo Nubian

Nubians are a dual-purpose breed, meat and milk, their milk being prized for cheese making. The Breed Standard for Nubians differs significantly from that for the Swiss breeds (Saanen, British Alpine, Toggenbury). One of the biggest and strongest of the goat breeds, Nubians are expected to have an imposing and exotic presentation – marked Roman nose; long, pendulous ears framing the face; a straight, strong topline; and straighter hind legs than the Swiss. Their udder is often not as capacious as that of the Swiss and may lack good forward attachment. This is one genetic aspect some good breeders are endeavouring to improve.

From those days numbers have multiplied and now there are around 60 Nubians, comprising males and females of different age groups, plus some 90 head of Boers. 'I am planning to exhibit a couple of each breed at forthcoming local and coastal agricultural shows. Then I take them to the Canberra Royal in late February and the Sydney Royal in March. That's far enough ahead to plan for now, especially as Sydney Royal is 10 days and we'll have to see how we pull up after it.

'If there are GR readers interested in showing pedigree stock, I'd recommend they join the relevant breed society; they'll then have access to info that will help them. If their area has a local club, that's an excellent place to start. Often newcomers are daunted by the prospect of showing their animals, but assistant stewarding is an excellent way to learn the ropes and work out what you have to do. Later, when you're experienced and confident, tackling the first level of judge's accreditation can be a major learning curve, teaching you to look for excellence in stock, including your own.'

Jenny says she's always loved the excitement and camaraderie of showing. She enjoyed the years with the horses and then when the goats came onto the scene it was just a natural progression to exhibiting them. Encouragement from friends in the goat fraternity was the icing on the cake. Showing is a great hobby and activity, but Jenny says be warned: once you get into it there isn't any time left for other pursuits.

# Travelling with Children

by Steve Burgess & Elaine Bradley, Dagun, Qld.

There are often letters in the Feedback section from people wishing to take their young families on trips throughout Australia. We would like to offer some suggestions based on travels with our children through many parts of Australia over the years.

We have been through two phases of travelling for extended periods with kids. The first time was when our eldest daughter was young. We were living in Perth, WA, and on several occasions took extended holidays both within WA and interstate, touring and visiting music festivals and friends.

Our vehicle was a Kombi, which we had fitted out fairly simply, and generally we travelled pretty light. There was a roof rack on top, which carried items like a second spare wheel, fuel, tent, folding table, tarpaulin and similar equipment. The rear interior was mainly a sleeping platform, with gear stored in boxes underneath. The area between and behind the front seats contained a small fridge, small cupboard, water container and other 'stuff' (like a container for growing sprouts and a large jar of keffir yoghurt, which kept us well fed throughout our journeys). We modified the middle folding seat of a microbus to sit forward of the bed platform. On some trips we removed this.

The Kombi setup served us well for many years, but when we set off travelling for an indeterminate length of time with our two youngest children (then aged two and a half and five years) we knew that it would be inadequate. We would be spending a fair bit of time in the Kimberleys (our eldest daughter had grown up and moved to Kunnunurra), and would be covering longer distances between stopping places than we had been used to. We would have had to nurse the poor old Kombi too much to avoid overheating, and those long, long stretches of featureless bitumen in possibly searing heat would be pretty uncomfortable at 80 kph, motor roaring, worrying about cracking heads and roadside repairs 500 kilometres from the nearest source of parts.

We briefly considered trucks, vans and converted buses, but having talked to lots of people on our past travels and to two of my uncles who had run outback tours in the Northern Territory, we settled on a setup that worked well for our circumstances. We travelled in a Holden Kingswood station wagon towing a small (anything you can't unhitch and manoeuvre by hand is too big), solidly built trailer. We spent a fair bit of time and money setting up the trailer and car for our purposes, with foldout benches on the side and a roof rack on the top of the trailer. When we needed to stay in one place for a while, or if the weather required it, we set up a fairly comfortable family-sized tent. Otherwise, we slept in bunks and stretchers under a tarpaulin and mosquito netting, which fitted onto the side of the trailer. This left us with the car free to go sightseeing.

The advantages of this setup were:

- It was fairly cheap to purchase, much cheaper than a large four-wheel drive, bus or truck, and we could go more places than a bus or a truck. The car had a limited-slip diff and pump-up air shockies. The trailer could be unhitched and moved by hand to enable turning around in tight spots.
- It was much cheaper than travelling by bus, truck or large four-wheel drive (fuel is very expensive in places).
- It was comfortable, fast travelling and much more tolerable for the kids.
- Parts could be found and repairs could be done anywhere, cheaply.
- We didn't have to carry our home around with us when staying in one spot for a few weeks.
- The kids soon got used to sleeping under the stars when the weather allowed it (most of the time) and developed a better appreciation of the natural beauty of the places we visited.

We tried to keep our travelling time down to only three-hour blocks at a time, which kept the 'are we there yet?' choruses down to a minimum. Before leaving, we packed an activities box for each child that contained things such as jigsaws, colouring books, pencils, 'fiddling' toys (such as bendy dolls, Transformer cars, threading boards, beads, yarn and Lego blocks) and simple handcrafts that they could learn along the way. We also packed into the trailer large quantities of dried fruit and nuts for nibblies. Before each stint of driving, some activities were selected from the boxes and put within easy reach of the children, along with a drink bottle each (with pop-top lid) and their own munch-boxes topped up for the day.

Mt Nameless in the Hamersley Range near Tom Price – the kids climbed to the top.

On our trip we saw many people with huge expensive travelling rigs that could not visit many of the great places we had seen and passed many expensive four-wheel drives that were crippled by something as common as a broken window or simple part malfunction – waiting for parts to arrive from Adelaide, several thousand kilometres away! We also talked to people who did not have the money for fuel to take their old converted school bus to the next town, or were financially crippled by the repair costs on their old vehicle.

The stint of travelling with the two youngest kids, when we didn't really know how long we would be travelling and where we would end up, was probably one of the best things we have done. The kids were the happiest and healthiest that they had ever been, before or after, and it gave us the resolve to make some major changes in our lives.

We now live at Dagun, about 15 kilometres south of Gympie, Queensland, in the Mary Valley. We settled here in 1994 and have gone through what seems to be a lifetime of ups and downs since then, but feel that this is where we belong in the world. We cannot foresee anything that would entice us to leave. If we were to head off travelling now, we would probably choose a similar setup to what we had in 1993–94 (a station wagon and trailer), although I think that newer vehicles are not as easy to fix on the side of the road as our old wagon was. The general rule would be to choose a common vehicle and stay away from any model with a reputation for electrical faults, particularly in their engine-management systems. It is also worth taking out basic membership with the RAC or similar organisation, adding extra cover for your trailer, in case you need assistance with finding parts and as a general breakdown service. Their Australia-wide network usually means that you can get help wherever you are.

Finally, consider the season in which you will be travelling: May to October is ideal for northern Australia (above 30° latitude) to avoid the heat and the wet season; early spring and late autumn for travelling across the Nullabor (watch those extremes of heat in the day and cold at night). It pays to be aware of any special events, festivals and the like, that might be scheduled for the area you're visiting; although they can provide extra sources of entertainment, it could also mean that camping spaces are booked out long in advance by the rest of the travelling population.

# Make A Simple Flower Press

by Sharon Greenaway, Strathfieldsaye, Vic.

Not only will you find this simple flower press useful for drying an extensive range of flowers, it can also make a lovely gift. In addition, it's a great way of reusing cardboard and leftover pieces of plywood if you have any.

I bought a new sheet of plywood measuring 1200 x 450 x 6 millimetres and was able to make six flower presses from the one piece.

## MATERIALS

- 1 sheet of 6 mm thick plywood

The number of presses you want to make will determine the sheet size.

- 4 of 6 x 50 mm counter sunk screws and 4 of 6 mm BSW hex nuts for each press you are making
- 3 – 4 mm thick cardboard

Make sure there are no dents or lines in the pieces of cardboard as these may affect how your pressed flowers will look. You will need enough to cut out six pieces measuring 30 x 14 cm.

- 5 mm drill bit and drill
- saw to cut the wood
- sandpaper or file
- pencil
- guillotine or sharp scissors

## METHOD

Measure the plywood into two rectangles of 30 x 14 centimetres per flower press. Cut out pieces, keeping edges as straight as possible. Neaten the edges with sandpaper or a file.

Mark with pencil where the holes are to go on one piece of plywood, 1.5 centimetres from each corner.

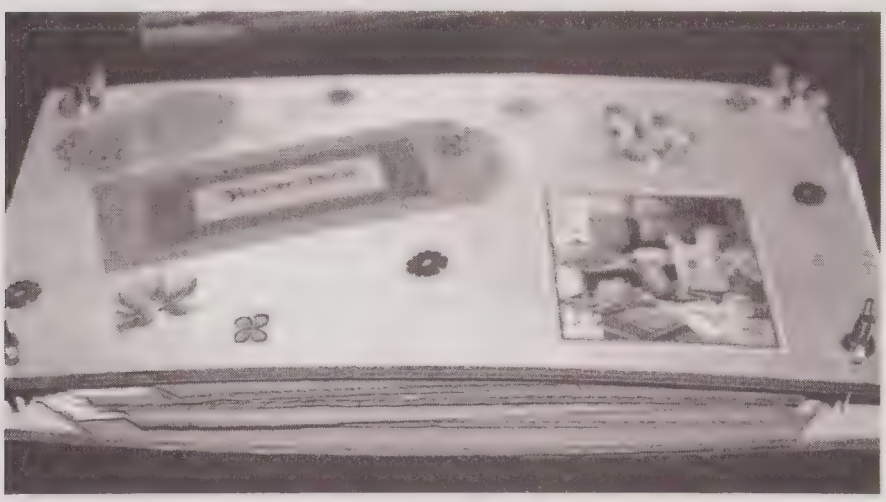
Place the two pieces of ply together, the marked piece on top. Carefully holding the pieces together, drill holes in each corner all the way through.

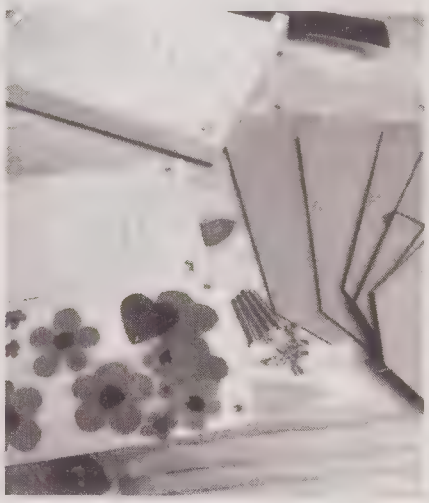
Dust wood shavings off plywood.

Take the cardboard and trace the flower press onto it, making six shapes. Cut out cardboard. Make a diagonal cut across each corner so that the cardboard can sit neatly inside the screws.

Insert screws into each corner of one piece of ply. Layer the cardboard onto this and then place the second piece of ply onto the screws. Twist on the nuts.

Your flower press can now be decorated any way you like, or you can use it straight away. As I can't paint, I decorated my flower presses using pictures cut out from wrapping paper, gluing them onto the raw plywood. A glue stick that is used for paper and cardboard works well.





### HOW TO PRESS FLOWERS

The flowers I like to use are pansies and small sprigs of lavender, but the list is endless. Any flower that can be laid out as flat as possible can be used. You can cut thick flowers in half and press the two halves separately.

Pick the flowers you want to use only when there is no water on them. Any moisture will make them go mouldy. I prefer to have the press ready to use before picking the flowers so that they are pressed as fresh as possible.

Place a piece of cardboard onto the base of the flower press and then a sheet of white paper of similar size. Blotting paper is the best paper to use, but any smooth white paper will do. Carefully lay out the flowers onto it. Don't overcrowd. Cover with a second sheet of paper. Place a piece of cardboard on top and repeat process until all six pieces of card are used or you have pressed all the flowers you want to do. Don't use paper that has a rough texture unless you want your flowers to take on that texture as well.

Put on the top of the press and screw together as tightly as you comfortably can.

Place the press in a dry area. I've read that if you change the paper every few days more colour will be retained in the flowers, but I just put the press away and only come back to it a few weeks later in order to use the flowers. The length of time the flowers take to dry will depend on the temperature and humidity where the press is kept.

### USES FOR PRESSED FLOWERS

There are myriad ways to use your pressed flowers. Pansies look lovely on handmade cards and bookmarks. Pressed lavender used on cards gives the added gift of the lavender scent. Other areas of craft include decoupage, candles and pressed flower pictures.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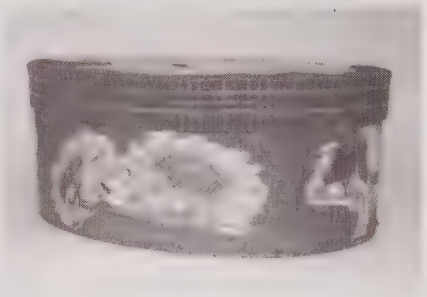
# Cut Out For Craft

by Jose Robinson, Noosaville, Qld.



Decoupage has been practised for centuries. It is the art of decorating ornaments, boxes or other surfaces by gluing on paper cut-outs and finishing the job with many coats of varnish so the surface looks almost like glass. I believe there are fine Chinese and Persian examples in existence which date back to the early 15th century. The origins of the craft go back to antiquity, so nobody is sure of its actual beginnings.

Apparently, in England in the Victorian period, ladies of the court were lovers of decoupage as a fine arts hobby and were enthusiastic that its secrets remained with them. It was a genteel pastime in that era.

Today decoupage is popular as a decorative craft or as a way of revamping old pieces in the spirit of both folk art and recycling. The word itself comes from the French word *découper* – to cut out.

The main aim of decoupage is to achieve a perfectly smooth finish so that the paper joins cannot be detected by the most expert of critics. Screens, trays, plates, lamp bases, place mats, boxes and greeting cards are a few of the most popular objects suitable for decoupage treatment. Even furniture can be decoupaged. Ordinary objects can be transformed into things of great beauty. The main requirements are an item to decorate, suitable pictures, glue, sandpaper, varnish, creativity and patience.

For the beginner, I would suggest starting with a fairly small object. Perhaps an old wooden cigar box, or one of the inexpensive plain wooden boxes available in the craft section of discount shops. I bought some cute plain wooden boxes recently for only $2 each. It is possible to use a nicely shaped cardboard box; the glued-on pictures and layers of varnish give it strength.

Decoupage can be as sweetly romantic or as avant-garde as you like – it all depends on the pictures you choose.

## MATERIALS

- timber box
- glossy magazines, art books, quality wrapping paper etc
- small sharp scissors
- sandpaper, both medium and fine
- rubber roller, optional
- PVC glue such as Aquadhere
- undercoat paint
- paint and tiny brush for any spaces
- sealer
- varnish

## PROCEDURE

### Prepare Materials

Sand the box then undercoat it. Leave to dry for 24 hours. While box is drying, select and cut out the pictures. Beginners should choose motifs with a reasonably simple outline.

### Create A Work Of Art

Arrange your cut-outs on the lid of the box until you are happy with the result. Sometimes distant images can look great as a background. The middle ground could be medium colour pictures and the foreground could be darkish colours. This idea can give your finished box some perspective. Overlapping of pictures is okay, but not more than one layer. Continue over the sides of the lid, then around the sides of the base.

If you are doing something very detailed, you could remove the pieces you've placed on the box lid, and arrange them piece by piece on a white card or paper template beside the box. This gives you a guide to where each piece needs to be glued in its correct position.

For simple designs it is possible to simply begin gluing each piece as you have arranged it on the box lid. Some people like to brush the PVC glue lightly over the front of the picture after it is glued on as well. I prefer not to do this. Smooth all images with your finger, then run over the surface lightly with a roller while the glue is still wet to ease out any wrinkles or bubbles. If you don't have a roller, use the side of your little finger, working from the centre outwards. Proceed to cover the base of the box in the same way.

Leave to dry overnight. Paint a background colour into any fine lines where the undercoat is still visible. Allow to dry.

### Seal

Apply one coat of sealer. This will prevent any showing through of images from the reverse side of your pictures. Sometimes I skip this step, depending on the quality of paper I have used. Then I would go straight to the varnish for the first coat.

### Sand And Varnish

When both glue and paint are perfectly dry, lightly sand the work and apply the second coat of varnish. The sanding and varnishing should be repeated about eight times, drying for 24 hours between each coat. Take great care when sanding, with the edges in particular. Use a medium grade sandpaper initially and go for a finer grade each time. Dampened fine-grade steel wool can also be used to give an extra fine finish. There should be no ridges visible around the edges of the images.

When the box is finished you have a lovely gift for someone, if you can bear to part with it. This could be the start of a creative hobby. Happy decoupaging!

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# Save The Koala

by Judith Davies, Coominya, Qld.

Saving the koala took on a whole new meaning when we moved house. Having never lived near a koala corridor and habitat area before, we were about to find out all about koalas.

A week after moving in we were woken in the early hours of the morning by a very loud noise outside our bedroom window; a cross between a loud grunting and snorting. Maybe our neighbour snores loudly, we thought, trying to ignore the noise.

The next day my husband Colin was doing some carpentry outside and heard the noise again. It was coming from the gum tree beside the house. On looking up the tree we could see a koala protesting about the noise below. Once we knew what the noise was we became accustomed to it.

While hanging up the clothes one day, I heard a terrible commotion that seemed to come from an empty 200-litre drum near the fence. On investigation, I found a koala looking up at me from inside the drum as if to say 'Get me out of here'. He must have been climbing over the fence and fallen into the drum. I tipped the drum on its side and out he sauntered as if to say 'It's about time'.

A few days later we were woken by such a commotion we had to investigate. This time the koala was spread-eagled over the fence and couldn't move. After a gentle lift and push, up the tree he went.

The next escapade was when I went to hang the clothes out and there was our resident koala sitting on top of the Hills Hoist hanging on for dear life as if to say 'There are no gum leaves up here'. Colin came to the rescue once again, coaxing the the koala along the clothesline and pulling the branches down for him to climb up to the safety of the gum tree.

Since then we have had father, mother and baby all visiting our gum trees on their journey through the koala corridor.

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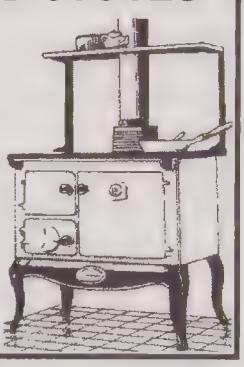

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# Starting With Sheep

by Jodi and Jeff Smith, Carlingford, NSW

In 2001 we purchased 28 acres at Tarana, between Oberon, Bathurst and Lithgow, NSW, with the view to moving from Sydney in preparation for retirement. We have lived in Sydney for nearly 35 years after moving here from the country for employment reasons. It was always our plan to move back to the country and, since our children had grown up, married and settled in Sydney, we looked for a place that was not too far away from them. We thoroughly enjoy the clean fresh air, cold winters and less humid summers at Tarana and can hardly wait to move there permanently. At present we have to be satisfied with weekend visits.

The property is steep so portions of it are risky for slashing with the tractor. Shropshire sheep, with their ability to thrive in hilly country, sounded like an attractive solution to the problem of keeping the acreage weed free and well maintained. The Shropshire is a heritage breed that has declined to a very low number in Australia and we decided we would like to help maintain the breeding line into the future.

The sheep are currently keeping the property neat and tidy and have become an item of interest to our neighbours, and especially to our grandchildren now that the first lambs have arrived.

We began giving the sheep some additional feeding with sheep nuts during the summer, mainly to facilitate easier handling. They have become quite placid and recognise us, especially at feeding time. They are more wary when strangers are present and keep their distance. We spend quite a lot of time just watching and enjoying the antics of the new lambs as they spring, leap and race each other. We propose to have a small breeding herd of approximately 20 ewes and to market the excess.

## WHY CHOOSE SHROPSHIRES?

Research of the old British heritage breeds of sheep through *Grass Roots* (see GR 153) and the internet gave us information about the placid temperament of this breed. We have planted new trees and shrubs on the property and wanted sheep that would not be too destructive. Also, being inexperienced when it comes to handling sheep, we were looking for animals that would be fairly easy to handle. We have found that their character has been reported correctly, except that the lambs are very inquisitive and will sample everything so unprotected plants have taken something of a beating.

Breeding this season has resulted in 50 percent of the ewes having twins and lambing has been problem free, except for fox predations that have resulted in some losses. When we take up residence on the property in the near future, we hope to overcome the fox problem by introducing a couple of alpaca guardians. We have found that the 'girls' are not hard on fences and seem to maintain a routine for their day. We are more than happy with our choice of breed; they are an attractive

Lambs are large and fast growing.

Shropshires are attractive looking, sturdy and solid, but not hard on the fences.

looking animal – strong, with solid well-covered bodies and sturdy legs. The lambs are large and fast growing. Rams would make excellent terminal sires for the meat market.

The Rare Breeds Trust of Australia has classified Shropshire sheep as critical in numbers in Australia with fewer than 500 ewes remaining.

### SOURCING STOCK

After reading an article in *Grass Roots*, we contacted John Beard of Koroit and Geoff Barker of Cobden, both of whom have been Shropshire breeders for many years. We visited both farmers, who showed us the animals and told us a good deal about their character and breeding traits. John Beard sold us ewes and Geoff Barker supplied ewes and a ram. John arranged for the transportation from Koroit through to Dubbo and we had a local carrier pick them up from Dubbo and deliver them to Tarana.

John and Geoff are committee members of Heritage Sheep Australia and are prepared to share information and to train and assist newcomers in understanding what is required and how to achieve satisfaction from small flock holdings.

### FUTURE PLANS

We propose to use the small number of ewes as a base to increase our stock and sell excess sheep on the local market when numbers permit. There has been an expansion of population in this area in recent years with more properties being broken up into smaller holdings. The Shropshire sheep is ideal for people who, like us, are looking for an interesting and useful animal to help maintain small acreage land and provide a sustainable use for that land at the same time.

Our main purpose and interest is to assist in retaining and building the rare breed of Shropshire back to sustainable numbers so that they don't disappear from the Australian scene. We believe it is in the interests of biodiversity to maintain a strong and healthy breed such as this one, and it's a good use for our hilly pastureland, which can remain productive while providing us with a beautiful and healthy lifestyle in our retirement.

We hope our property at Tarana eventually will be a haven for city-weary friends and relatives to visit; to spend time just soaking up the beauty and peace, enjoying the wonderful bird life, wildlife and other attractions of the area and having soul and body restored by a taste of nature at its best. The Shropshire sheep will be a part of that therapy too.

**Contacts**

John Beard: 03-5565-7916.
Geoff Barker: 03-5595-1585.


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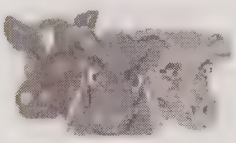

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# Keeping Your Cool

by Nevin Sweeney, St Clair, NSW.

**Thinking about replacing the electric fridge in your pursuit of self-sufficiency? Nevin road-tested some inexpensive cooling alternatives and found a winner.**

Over the past 20 or more years I have been involved in many aspects of self-sufficiency, but by far the most difficult to come to terms with has been replacing the humble refrigerator with something simpler, homemade and not tied to the 240-volt power grid. The two most obvious choices that sprang to my mind were something based on 12 volts or something based on the evaporation of water.

## TWELVE-VOLT POWERED FRIDGE

Last Christmas I got a small 12V/240V fridge that is built to look like a small version of a full size fridge, powered by a Peltier effect device. It looks cute, but uses about 2.5 to 3 amps to cool a volume of about 0.02 cubic metres, so, while handy, is no replacement for the Kelvinator in the corner of the kitchen. I want to put together my own cooler based on this technology, but it is still on the list of projects to be completed (when I do finish it you will be the first to know). There are compressor-based fridges that run on 12 volts on the market, but I have no experience with them. I had to look to another method.

## MAKING A COOLGARDIE SAFE

The classic of evaporative water technology is the Coolgardie safe, invented and used in the hot dry environment of the WA goldfields. It is usually a wooden frame with a hessian or similar fabric wrapped around it, with a water reservoir on the top and sometimes a catch-basin at the bottom. Water is placed in the top, soaks into the fabric and then moves down the outside of the safe by capillary action to drain into the catch-basin; on the way some evaporates, cooling the inside of the safe. That, at least, is the theory, but how does it translate into practice?

To start with I did a bit of research to see what information was around. One book that was very helpful was *New Australian Home Carpentry Illustrated* by Alex Smith, published by Colourgravure. It's not dated, but looks to be early post World War II and I still see it in second-hand shops on a regular basis. There is a design on page 65 that, while too big for me, I used as a base for my design.

### Construction Material

The construction material I used for the framework was 19 x 42-millimetre DAR pine, which was cheap (less than $1 per linear metre), available, light and easy to work with. The whole frame stands 1.5 metres tall, which, as luck would have it, happens to be as high as the original four lengths of pine that I bought – funny how designs work out like that. The pine is not treated in any way and so is subject to damage from the water, which meant I had to apply a couple of coats of paint before putting it into service.

### The Frame

To start the frame I connected three cross-pieces – top, centre and about 100 millimetres up from the ground – to each set of uprights with wiggle nails. These nails are cheap and nasty and if I had known how much work the rest of the safe would be I would have used dowels and glue, although at that stage I didn't have a dowelling jig, but I do now!

This gave me two sides that had to be joined together to make the carcass of the Coolgardie safe, but the question was how wide should it be? I decided to see what containers were around that could be pressed into service as a reservoir and catch-basin. Again, it had to be light, cheap and readily available. My initial thought was the mind bogglingly useful pet litter tray, but in this case it proved too shallow; I wanted something with more capacity. I settled on two 360 x 300 x 120-millimetre deep plastic basins (10 – 12-litre capacity) that retailed at the Reject Shop for the princely sum of $2.50 each. The distance between the uprights thus became 360 millimetres, less about 15 millimetres on each side so the overhanging ledge of the bowl would sit on it, thus providing a support. The lower catch basin would sit in the space formed by the lowest cross-pieces if the overhanging corners were cut off.

### Assembling The Safe

The next trick was to form up the carcass by installing a top, centre and lower rail on the back and a top and bottom rail on the front (to allow for the door). This I did by drilling and screwing through the side of the upright and into the end grain of the rail. Two

screws on each side of each rail and the carcass started to look like a piece of furniture instead of a bunch of randomly assembled pieces of wood.

### Shelves

I needed to insert some shelves for the produce to stand on. My *Aussie Home Carpentry Illustrated* suggested using cement sheeting, but due to lack of availability at the time and concerns for weight (I wanted the safe to be transportable) I constructed timber shelves. I suspect that the book was probably right because the shelves would become wet and cool due to evaporation as well as the food. You can't win 'em all!

I screwed in some supports to the sides of the uprights and then screwed pieces of the 19 x 42-millimetre pine to the supports to form an open grid for use as a shelf. Before the lowest shelf went in, the lower catch basin had to be fitted because there was not enough clearance between the bottom shelf and the bottom rail to allow the basin to be slid in and out.

### The Door

The door was a simple construction of two uprights with top, centre and bottom rails wiggle-nailed to them. I didn't put in any diagonal bracing and it hasn't dropped yet. This I fixed to the front of the safe with screws and some mild steel hinges (I considered brass, but they were a bit expensive), so I had to ensure that they were well painted to prevent rust.

### The Cover

With the carcass finished and the basins in place, it was time to fit the fabric cover. Again, simple and cheap was the rule, so I bought a couple of hessian sacks that are used for dog bed covers, only $2 a piece at a local pet barn. They are sewn up the edges and I decided to fit them lengthways down the safe, to allow for an unobstructed water flow, so had to undo all the stitching, which was quite tedious but the thread could be (and was) used to tie tomato plants to stakes. Each sack went the full length of the safe with enough left over to overhang into the upper and lower basin and was wide enough to neatly cover two sides, so I needed two sacks.

Timber slat shelves inside the Coolgardie.

I attached the sacks with dome-headed drawing pins, which gave a nice effect. The first sack covered the left-hand side and the back, the second covered the right-hand side and the door, the idea being that the drawing pins were fixed to the leading edge of the door so that it could be opened. When the door is opened wide, the overhang into the top and bottom basin has to be tucked in again, but it was either that or arrange some form of flap to allow water to pass from the top basin onto the hessian door cover.

Something to be aware of is that the sack that was attached to door acted as a very efficient wick, while the other one, initially at least, did not seem all that interested in soaking up the water, regardless of my threats, begging or bad language. I suggest that if you try this, soak both sacks in water first, perhaps with a little detergent to help the water 'wet out' the fibres. After some use, both seem to be okay now.

### How Does It Work?

The effectiveness of the Coolgardie depends on such variables as ambient temperature, humidity and air movement, and I suspect that while a Sydney summer is no hotter than the WA goldfields it is somewhat more humid. If the top basin is filled, it will empty into the bottom basin in about 12 to 18 hours and will result in the material inside being a bit cooler than the surrounding air, but I have not measured by how much. Much of this water is caught in the bottom catch-basin and can be recycled.

The cooler did not work in the shady garage, due to the lack of air movement, and it is now behind the rear window of the garage. I intend to put a covering of shadecloth over the area to cut down on sun but allow some air movement. I must admit to being a bit disappointed with the cooler's performance. Improvements to think about could include:

- Retrofitting those compressed cement shelves.
- Wrapping another layer of hessian around the cooler.
- Installing the above shadecloth.
- Installing a tap in the bottom basin to facilitate water recycling.

It may be that I have just not found the right place for it yet. One initial thought was that the cooler was too tall and the water would evaporate before it got to the end of the cooler and into the bottom catch-basin, but this has not proved to be the case.

## POT-IN-POT SYSTEM

This little invention is absolute genius and exceeded my expectations from the very first. It was invented by Mr Mohammad Bah Abba in Nigeria, Africa, who took a strong local tradition of pottery and found another use for it. I caught the end of a documentary about the idea, but wanted to know more, so I plugged 'pot in pot' into the internet and got a bit more information.

The idea is fiendishly simple, which usually means it takes a special kind of intellect to think of it. Take one large, unglazed terracotta pot and a smaller unglazed terracotta pot, and put the smaller pot inside the larger one. Fill the space between them with coarse sand and then saturate the coarse sand with water. The water moves by capillary action into both unglazed pots and evaporates from the inside and outside clay surface. Bingo . . . one evaporative cooler.

The idea is that the locals make the pots specially, using all local materials, so everybody wins except the multinationals: life's hard ain't it? Theoretically, you could win the clay (dig it from the ground), refine it, make the pots, dry them and then fire them, all using low-tech local materials and processes. This is also on the list of things I want to do, but it may be a while before I get to it.

### Assembling The Pots

I made a couple of them in one afternoon, but I bought the pots from (you

guessed it) the Reject Shop, at $6 for the smaller pots and $12 for the larger, so my coolers cost $18 a piece to set up, plus a bit for the sand (in Africa they go for 40 cents a set). I suppose you could use the 'flower pot' style pot, but the more rounded ones can store more food for the same size pot. The ones I bought are much more spherical than the traditional pot.

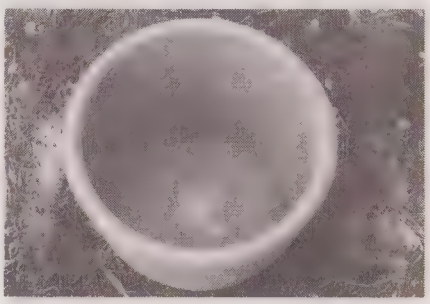
The pots made for this purpose also contain no drain hole, so the first job was to put some putty in the drain holes of both pots and then cover the putty with a square of plastic sheeting to stop any leakage. I then placed a layer of about 25 millimetres of sand in the bottom of the larger pot and sat the smaller pot in the larger one. It is then a simple matter to pour more coarse sand into the gap between the pots.

The pots are now ready to be charged with water and there are a couple of points to note:

• If you leave the sand down about 12 millimetres instead of filling the space entirely it makes putting in the water much easier.

• If you put too much water in initially, the smaller pot will tend to float out of the larger one, so only put a small amount of water in at a time or put a weight in the bottom of the inner pot.

Filling the sand with water takes some time because it has to percolate down through the sand. If you do a bit and then come back to it, it gives the water time to soak into the unglazed terracotta, which is important for keeping the inside pot heavy. Apart from putting a couple of layers of wet hessian over the top to keep the heat out, the job is done.



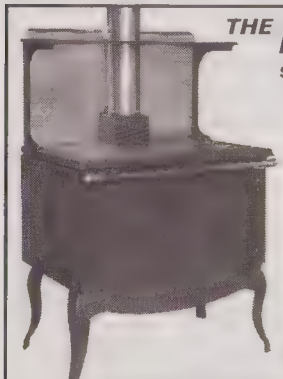
Top: Start with two rounded, unglazed terracotta pots.
Middle: Plug up the drain holes.
Bottom: Assemble pots with sand between.

**Testing**

Once one was fully charged with water I stuck a few drink cans in it and then walked away for a while. When I came back a few hours later and reached in for the can, it felt cold! The thing worked like a ripper! Being of a scientific bent, however, I though that I had better test it to see if it was cold, so I used the most scientific test I know and applied the cold can to the upper part of my wife's arm. The resultant scream and beating confirmed, somewhat painfully, that I was on to a winner.

A full charge of water lasts several days, depending on ambient conditions, and it seems to work inside or outside, so long as it is in a shady spot; full sun is a bit much for it. One thing that has been an issue is that, with use, a crusty skin of salt forms on the inner and outer surface of the cooler, from salts leached out and then left behind by the evaporating water. Whether the salts are from the water, the terracotta or the sand, I don't know, but it is still coming through and needs to be periodically scraped off or it interferes with the evaporation process and the setup seems less effective. A bit of water and a scourer seem to do the job admirably.

This is a simple and very effective invention to help people in the lesser developed parts of Africa, but we can use the same technology in the cause of Australian self-sufficiency. While researching this invention on the net I came across a company that was going to make and sell an 'improved' model with a solar powered fan. I can't help getting the feeling that they have missed the point though!

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# Friendship Cake

by Lynn Sutherland, Brighton, Qld.

Trish Woodhouse of Whyalla recently asked how to make an Amish Friendship Cake culture. This sounded very familiar. Sure enough, we found the instructions in GR 99, over 11 years ago. Lynn Sutherland sent a Feedback letter and we reprint Lynn's recipe for new chums and those who missed out first time around.

**RECIPE FOR FRIENDSHIP (CAKE)**

To make the starter: mix 2 cups plain flour, 1 tbsp sugar, ½ tbsp vinegar, and enough water to make a thin batter. Cover with a cake rack and a thin tea towel and stir once every day as it settles and forms a clear liquid on top. On the fourth day proceed to make the friendship cake by taking one cup from the starter and then adding one cup each of sugar, plain flour and milk as per the recipe, mixing well and then covering bowl with clingwrap. From then on just proceed as per cake recipe (below). I don't think you really need to leave the original starter for 4 days – 1 or 2 days should be enough, depending on the temperature.

To make the cake proceed as follows.

Day 1: put previously made starter in a large bowl, adding the following ingredients on the specified days and keeping mixture covered with a lid or clingwrap after each step.

Days 1 & 5: add to starter and stir in – 1 cup each of sugar, plain flour and milk.

Days 1 – 10: stir daily.

Day 10: Take out 3 cups of mixture and give 1 cup to each of 3 friends, or keep 1 cupful as a starter for your own next cake. To the remaining batter add:

1 cup sugar
1 cup flour
1½ tsp cinnamon
½ tsp salt
¾ tsp nutmeg
1½ tsp bicarb soda
1½ tsp baking powder
2 tsp vanilla
3 eggs
¾ cup oil or melted butter

Beat well. Fold in ingredients such as raisins, apples, nuts, banana, pineapple or mixed fruit. Grease and flour a large cake tin. Bake at 150° C for 40 – 45 minutes, until a skewer comes out clean. After baking you can top with a mixture of 1 cup brown sugar, 1 tsp cinnamon, 1 tsp plain flour and ½ cup soft butter. Put under griller for 5 minutes before serving.

Start again from day 1.


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# Fridge Magnet Memorabilia

by Jane Smith, Kilsyth, Vic.

A personal and lasting gift will bring a smile of fond memories to the face of the recipient a long time from now. Such items come under the title of memorabilia and we often find them scattered in the ribbons and laces and still-folded silk greeting cards of our grandparents' generation, and even earlier than that. A rather romantic concept I've always felt it to be, and a fridge magnet gives it a modern aspect.

A fridge magnet of your own making is a special gift that can accompany a card to be mailed away, either in Australia or overseas. The gift magnet needs to be light and flat; it can feature your own small masterpiece: a photograph of your cat, a cut section of a print, an original drawing on a thick card, or perhaps a handwritten poem.

## GETTING STARTED

Before you can begin you need to source the magnetic strips for the backs of your small pictures.

I found my first trial magnets right at home on my fridge door on small outdated calendars issued by firms and politicians. Cut around the small magnetic strips on the backs and discard the rest to the recycling bin. No need to try to remove the magnet itself, that thin card it's already attached to will be just right for applying glue to when making your own creation. An unwanted business card may be all magnet on its back. Lovely. Cut it crossways into three strips or lengthways into two longer strips.

If you really get into this hobby and want to make lots of fridge magnets later, for your school or charity stall perhaps, and need to buy the material, look under 'Magnets and Magnetised Materials' in the yellow pages of the phone directory. There might be a store somewhere near you.

There are thick, pliable magnetised sheets, black on the magnetised side and white on the other, that can be cut with strong kitchen scissors. Also available are sheets or strips of precut, preglued magnets that come with one side covered with a peel-off sheet, but good contact glue can be used if not.

The magnetic sheets cost $50 for an A4 size, but magnets are cheaper bought by the roll, and none need be wasted. However, I asked for, and was sold, a generous lot of offcut strips for $5. I cut them further into small strips about two by four centimetres to make 60 bits.

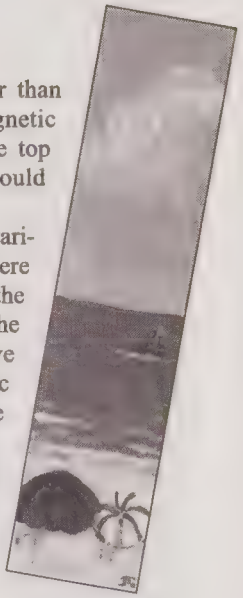
## MAKING YOUR MAGNET

I cut the picture for my first magnet from a sheet of thick cardboard I'd painted an attractive and colourful design onto. I had brushed some left-over pools of fast-drying tube-acrylic paints over a piece of thick card and could see lots of flowers in those colours.

I cut the painted card into several small sections and the first attempt was made from a piece six by eight centimetres. My small picture was finished by drawing a few wavy lines over the painted shapes to indicate flowers.

The edges were bevelled by holding the picture face-down and angled over a sheet of sandpaper, then dragging lightly across on each edge. An emery board could be used, but the sandpaper gives a more even edge.

I thought I might as well make several pictures now, using up the rest of the painted segments. While I was on a roll, inspiration to create more magnets kept me busy. I pasted a part of a photo that made a portrait of the cat onto another card and bevelled the edges on sandpaper. Some bookmarks I'd painted on bits of cardboard came to light, too thick to use as bookmarks, I'd realised, but kept them for future inspiration, and this was it. Throw nothing out, you'll need it one day. The bookmarks were set on a new career of becoming fridge magnets, a bit longer than usual, but two magnetic bits on the back, one top and one bottom, would take care of that.



All set to go, the various small pictures were laid face down and the magnets glued on the backs. A protective sheet cut from a plastic bag was laid over the top, in case of a missed spot of glue, and a large, heavy book was gently set down on top to weigh it all down until the glue was quite dry. Left overnight, all set in its proper place. When the weight and plastic cover were removed, I had enough fridge magnet gifts to send with all my greeting cards for some time into the future.

The magnets can be attached to the cards, if desired, by gluing two tiny strips of magnetised material to the card, black side upwards, so magnet will stick to magnet in a temporary bond. I'll be making my own cards, having found thick card in several colours at the same shop sale as I found some larger than normal envelopes. I'll just make the cards to fit the envelopes, trying to match my creativity to the intended recipient's interests or personality.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# Hydroponics – The Next Step

by Jack Garnham, Helensvale, Qld.

So, you read about hydroponics in GR 161 and decided to make a start. Terrific! Now you are ready for the few extra details necessary for real success. This article will discuss plant preparation, and one very important aid – the truncheon.

I'm assuming that you have assembled your growing channels, pots, pump and piping; that you have your medium ready and your chosen nutrient mixed; and that you are ready to set your hydroponics system going. Let's get some plants into it then.

## PLANT PREPARATION

If you are using seedlings bought from a nursery, you must remove them from their punnet and germinating soil before you transfer them into their new environment. The plants going into the system need to be washed clean.

One method of preparing them is to have on hand two buckets of cold water. Place the plants, still in their punnet, into the first bucket so that they become soaked and are easily removed from the punnet. Wash the roots by gently swishing the whole plant in the water. When all the soil particles have dissolved or washed off, put the plant into the second bucket until you are ready to plant it out. It is quite important your seedlings are clean so the system does not become contaminated.

## PLANTING OUT

Now that you have some clean plants, you are ready to put them into the pots and into the system.

You will need to have your chosen medium at hand and some clean water. If you are using rockwool or perlite, it is helpful to have it quite wet. In the case of perlite, fill the pot about two-thirds full. A small dibber is handy to make the space for the plant roots in the medium. Put in the plant and tamp it down, adding a little more perlite if you think the plant needs it. Remember, plants will still need supporting even in the grow pot. If you are using clay pellets, it does not matter so much to start with them wet, but it is still important to wet them once the plant is in place to prevent the roots drying out.

The method of planting is a little different when you are using clay pellets. Take a grow pot and half-fill it with some clay pellets. Tilting the pot to one side so that the pellets spill toward the lip (but not out of the pot), introduce the plant gently down the slope of the medium so that the roots reach as far down to the bottom of the pot as you can manage. Straighten the pot, top up with a few more pellets (the pot does not have to be full), and wet it by pouring a little water into the top of the pot. You can dip the pot, plant and all, but take care that the plant and medium do not float out of the pot. Then simply place the pot into the channel and deal with the next plant.

If you are using rockwool, wet it, wrap the roots in a large enough piece to protect and support the roots and stem in the pot, and place the resulting bundle in the pot.

Once you have a full channel, or even only one pot in a channel if you like, switch your pump on and watch your system come to life.

Perlite as a medium is also suitable for germinating larger seeds, such as beans or silverbeet, directly in your system. If you can manage this, it saves time and avoids disturbing the seedlings by the washing process. If you have trouble getting seeds to germinate, try leaving them in the fridge for a couple of nights. This activates the seed's growing cycle and they will soon reward you with rapid growth. You can also germinate large seeds in a pot filled with clay balls, but they do take a little longer than in perlite.

Most medium types can be cleaned after use by soaking in a bleach mixture, but do rinse thoroughly at the

Pot with perlite, dibber in place for hole, one plant ready washed.

Dibber and truncheon.

Pot with hole ready for seedling.

final stage of cleaning and again before you reuse it. Seedling roots are sensitive to bleach burning and if it occurs the plant will probably be lost.

### NUTRIENT

Now your system is set up, your plants are washed and in place in your chosen medium, and the pump is switched on and the flow has started.

All that is yet to be done is to add the nutrient to the water so there is something for the tiny plant to feed on. As always, there is considerable choice and many types of nutrient are available. To decide which suits you, you will probably need to try out several kinds. In making your decision do not overlook a simple price comparison as prices do vary. At least one brand of the powder-mix type makes up to 250 litres per 500-gram packet, which is very economical to say the least – an important factor to remember. Not all dealers carry all brands so look around and do not overlook the larger hardware shops and nursery chains.

### THE TRUNCHEON

Nutrient strength is very important in the growth cycle and you do need a way of testing this. There are various kinds of meters, but almost certainly one of the best is the Nutrient Salts Meter, known as the truncheon. Marketed by Bluelab Hydroponics, it costs about $130, which might seem a little high, but it comes with a five-year warranty and is reliable, easy to read and simple to use. The truncheon comes ready to use (check for batteries), doesn't require calibrating and is an indispensable tool.

You simply place the end of the truncheon in the nutrient solution you wish to test and a small bulb lights up at the corresponding strength number on the truncheon, giving you an instant reading. Since each plant has its individual nutrient strength requirement, you need to be able to measure the strength of the nutrient that you are giving it.

This means that you will not get the best results if you mix plantings of some species. For instance, lettuces need a strength of 8 – 12, whereas tomatoes need 22 – 28. To give them a common nutrient means it will either be too strong for the lettuces or too weak for the tomatoes. But beans (18 – 25) and silverbeet (18 – 24) can be grown together. Likewise basil (10 – 14) and lettuces (8 – 12), or rhubarb (16 – 20) and carnations (14 – 20).

You can work out other combinations by comparing strengths as given in the table, depending on what you wish to grow. You will probably memorise the more frequently used strength numbers eventually, but there is no real need to. Make a copy and get it laminated. You can then leave it where you mix your nutrient so it is always on hand, and it doesn't matter if you get it wet if it is laminated.

Finally, get to know your dealer. I have yet to meet one who has not been helpful and willing to make suggestions and give advice.

It is all systems go for a successful, new, and very practical hobby – gardening the hydroponics way. Happy washing, happy planting. Forget the weeds, forget the digging, just enjoy the results.

## Nutrient Strengths

The numerals given show the strength as indicated by a truncheon meter in its CF column.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vegies and Herbs** | |
| Basil | 10 – 14 |
| Beans | 18 – 25 |
| Beetroot | 18 – 22 |
| Broccoli | 18 – 24 |
| Brussels sprout | 18 – 24 |
| Cabbage | 18 – 24 |
| Carrot | 17 – 22 |
| Cauliflower | 18 – 24 |
| Celery | 18 – 24 |
| Chives | 18 – 22 |
| Cucumber | 16 – 20 |
| Leek | 16 – 20 |
| Lettuce | 8 – 12 |
| Mint | 10 – 14 |
| Onion | 18 – 22 |
| Parsley | 14 – 18 |
| Peas | 14 – 18 |
| Radish | 16 – 20 |
| Rhubarb | 16 – 20 |
| Spinach | 18 – 23 |
| Silverbeet | 18 – 24 |
| Thyme | 12 – 16 |
| Tomato | 22 – 28 |
| Turnip/parsnip | 18 – 24 |
| **Flowers** | |
| African violet | 10 – 12 |
| Carnation | 14 – 20 |
| Dwarf Rose | 16 – 20 |
| Lavender | 10 – 14 |
| Rose | 18 – 22 |

Medium types: clay balls, enough rockwool for a pot, perlite in pot, rockwool cube.

Tomato seedling in perlite 21 days after planting.


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# Food For Thought

by Lin Foley, Mylneford, NSW.

Christmas 2002 was a Christmas with a difference for our family. No, it wasn't because of the food or the number of presents. During that festive season our family suffered from a nasty bout of food poisoning!

I vividly remember taking my then four-year-old to the bathroom. There was no time to stop for the presents waiting under the tree – we had an urgent appointment with the bathroom. Needless to say, Christmas lunch was postponed!

For most of us food poisoning involves stomach aches accompanied by a frequent need to visit the bathroom. We shrug it off as a stomach bug, perhaps suspecting that last bit of ham we ate, which did look a bit suspect. Most people tend to 'sick it out' at home, making it hard to know the exact number of food poisoning cases each year.

Food poisoning is often associated with consumption of meat, poultry, seafood or eggs that have been left out of the fridge for too long or not properly cooked. But vegetables, fruit, cheeses and even sprouts can also be culprits. In hot weather particularly, bacteria can multiply quickly in unrefrigerated food.

Normally it is not the bacteria itself that makes us ill, but the toxins released by the bacteria. Therefore, the longer the bacteria have been allowed to multiply, the more toxin is released, the quicker the symptoms set in, and the sicker we get!

Salmonella outbreaks occur frequently; no wonder, with about 2200 strains of salmonella existing. Each strain causes nausea, stomach aches, fever, diarrhoea, and vomiting. These symptoms usually start about 12 to 48 hours after ingesting infected food.

*Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria occur normally in our intestines without causing any problems, however, some strains can cause great discomfort. Toxins released by these bacteria are often responsible for causing the infamous travellers' diarrhoea.

Although botulism is a rare form of food poisoning, it deserves a mention due to the severe symptoms and high mortality rate. Two serious outbreaks of botulism occurred in Canada and the United States in the 1980s. Chopped garlic in oil was identified as the source of the botulism toxin. Both governments now require jars containing garlic in oil to be treated with an acidification process to prevent the bacteria from multiplying. Other governments, including the Australian government, have since followed suit.

Homemade preserved vegetables in oil also need to be preserved with enough acid, usually vinegar, to keep the pH below 4.6 to prevent multiplication of harmful bacteria. Alternatively, the vegetables, including the herbs and garlic used for flavouring, can be dried or near-dried before being preserved in oil.

Tomatoes are naturally low in pH (high in acid), even more so when dried. However, some strains of *E. coli* and salmonella are able to survive in a high-acid environment so it is important to work hygienically.

With all these bacteria naturally occurring around us, keeping ourselves and our families healthy can seem pretty daunting. There are, however, simple things we can do to reduce the chance of becoming ill.

• Wash kitchen work surfaces, cutting boards and your hands with hot soapy water between each step in food preparation to prevent cross-contamination of foods.

• Dry dishcloths and tea towels between uses and regularly change or wash them.

• Wash hands before preparing or consuming a meal.

• Wear rubber or disposable gloves when you have cuts on your hands.

• Wash vegetables and sprouts thoroughly in clean running water.

• Store items in the fridge in covered glass or plastic containers or wrap them with food wrap.

• When defrosting meat or chicken in the fridge put it on a large dish and place the dish on the bottom shelf of the fridge to avoid any fluid dripping on items below.

• Keep food either hot or cold and do not leave hot food standing around, during a party, for example, for more than two hours. Don't leave food items (meat, chicken or egg products in particular) out on the kitchen bench, especially during our hot summer months.

• Don't eat any items that have passed the use-by date.

• Avoid consuming food from damaged or swollen cans.

• Cooking with high temperatures will destroy bacteria found in raw meat. Be aware that microwave cooking is less effective and may not cook the meat evenly.

• Avoid unclean food outlets.

• Follow the food safety guidelines in the instructions when home preserving.

• Finally, when in doubt, don't eat it – throw it out!

If symptoms continue for more than 48 hours, or are severe enough to cause concern, do visit a doctor. More excellent information on food safety procedures can be found on both the Food Science Australia website: www.foodscience.afisc.csiro.au and the CSIRO website: www.csiro.au.

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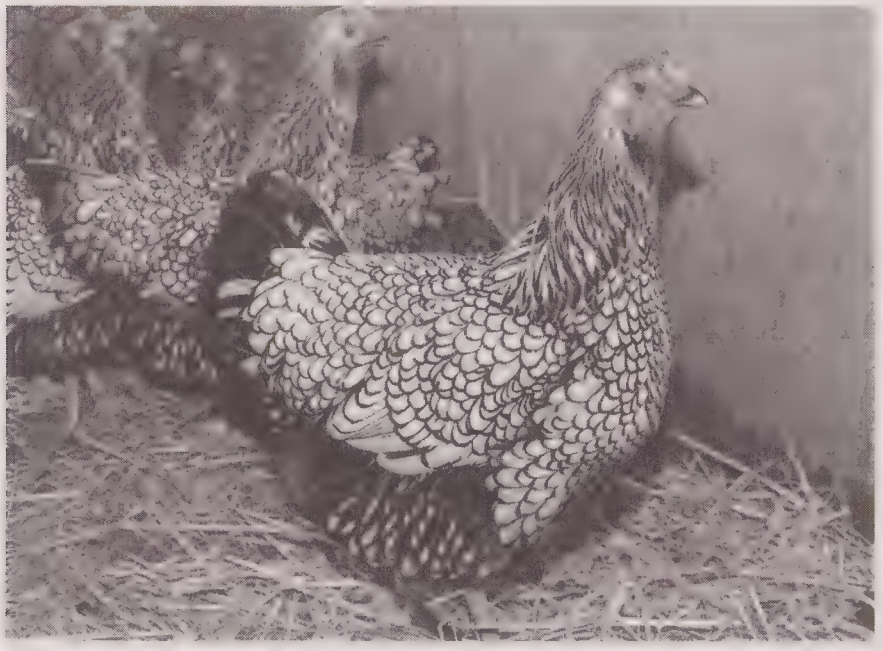
# Wonderful Wyandottes

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

The Wyandotte is well known for its success as a show bird, but is also a wonderful family fowl. It is docile natured, and comes in both bantam and standard sizes plus an extensive range of self-coloured and beautifully patterned plumage colours. It is also a popular bird, so locating stock is easier than with the rarer breeds. Like to know more? A progressive national club publishes a regular newsletter and maintains a website and there is a breed handbook that describes the numerous varieties and their management and breeding requirements.

I've waxed lyrical about many of the previous breeds featured in GR. The Orpington last issue, for example, was introduced in similar glowing terms. Actually there are several similarities between 'Orps' and 'Dottes', as they're frequently called: both have a placid, predictable temperament; they're easy to contain because neither is inclined to flying over fences; and each was fêted in its day for its high production and good looks. They also share a noticeable rounded or curved appearance. However, that's as far as the parallels go. Important details like comb type, skin colour, plumage patterns and quality and even recommended weights are vastly different. Later in the article we will provide some pointers to make distinguishing Orps and Dottes relatively easy.



## MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

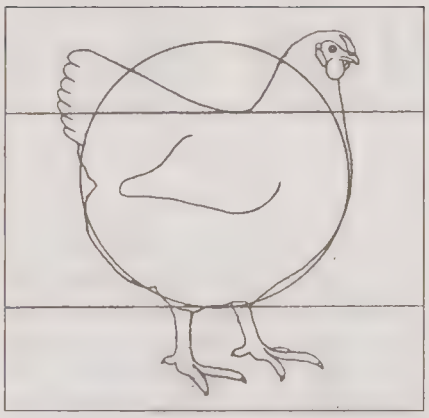
When you attend a show and see spectacular specimens of Wyandotte like the Laced, Partridge and Silver Pencilled varieties, it is important to be aware that you just can't buy a trio and go home and breed top quality exhibition birds. To produce show birds that meet the specific requirements of the standard, it is necessary to have separate male and female breeding stock. This is referred to as double mating and only a small number of breeds or colour varieties need to be produced with this system. The majority of pure breeds that are exhibited can be bred from one pen of birds and produce offspring that meet the demands of the standard. The *Australian Poultry Standards* contains the requirements

for all breeds. For some varieties of Wyandottes you need a pen of cockerel breeders, that is, specially marked birds of both sexes that produce the desired show colour and markings on males (the females from these matings are never shown) and a pen of pullet breeders, in which the rooster and male offspring are not shown but produce the desired colour and markings for exhibition females. All this 'mucking around' puts many people off, but if you want the birds for laying only, you're not really going to care if you've purchased pullets with male or female-producing plumage markings.

## AN AMERICAN BACKGROUND

The Wyandotte was developed by poultry farmers on the East Coast keen to have a second profitable breed following the success of the Plymouth Rock. Numerous breeders crossed and recrossed the breeds available then until a mix of bantam Sebright, and standard Hamburgh, Cochin and Brahma resulted in a useful bird. Initially it was called the Eureka, then the American Sebright and even the Hambletonian until consensus was reached on Wyandotte. One story suggests they were named after a boat of the same appellation, owned by a breeder, but most sources prefer the idea that the breed was named in honour of a local tribe of American Indians. Numerous strains of the Wyandotte existed and so disparate

were they that the breed was refused admittance to the *American Standard of Perfection* until consistency in type and colour were achieved in 1883, with the Silver Laced Wyandotte. Soon a Gold Laced variety was developed and a little later, the White. These were quickly followed by Buff, Black, Partridge, Silver Pencilled and Columbian. The latter, which has eye-catching black markings on the neck hackle, wings and tail on a white ground colour, was given its name in 1893 at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. More colours have been developed in recent years.



The Wyandotte, a bird of curves.

### PRETTY AND PRODUCTIVE

When the first specimens came to Australia they achieved great success on the show bench, but were also very good layers. Proof of this is in records that indicate they comprised almost one-third of the entries in early egg laying trials. They were touted too as farmers' fowls: good layers, good birds for the table, good sitters and broodies, quiet and docile and easily contained by a normal farm fence.

### MODERN WYANDOTTES

There are enough people breeding Wyandottes for both show and utility strains to exist, but yearly egg output will not come anywhere near what hybrids can produce. At best Wyandottes are moderate layers of tinted eggs. The bonus with this breed is that being medium sized, you're not up for a whopping feed bill, which you could expect with an Orpington or Sussex.

Friends who have bought young birds all say they take their time before commencing lay, so be prepared for pullets to be fully grown before laying. Females are moderately broody and will set and rear several clutches of chicks if you let them. You will find that cockerels hatched at home and finished off on a grain and maize mixture are excellent for the table. Once again, their moderate size is an advantage as they will be ready for dispatch well before the big-bodied breeds.

### RECOGNISING WYANDOTTES

With so many colour varieties available, it's easy for beginners to get confused, however, no other breed of large fowl has both a rose comb and a short well-spread tail. Wyandottes have a body that should fit neatly into a circle with just the head, tail and legs outside it. They have a deep wide body, medium length back with concave sweep up to the tail, a short arched neck and medium-length stout legs. The head is short and round and carries a rose comb that is broad at the base but tapers off to a point at the rear, following the shape of the head. By contrast, the Hamburgh, which also sports a rose comb, has the point ending in a horizontal line. The Wyandotte's rose comb is larger on the male than the female and must have the surface covered with tiny rounded points or protuberances. Wattles are longish and rounded and ear lobes oblong. Ear lobes are red and legs and feet yellow.

Breeds like the Orpington that beginners may confuse with Wyandotte can quickly be differentiated by their single comb and white legs and feet. The Light Sussex, which has the same plumage pattern as the Colombian Wyandotte, also has a single comb and white legs and feet.

Wyandotte colours include white, black, blue, red, silver and gold laced, blue laced, partridge and silver pencilled.

### MANAGEMENT

An easy breed for backyarders, Wyandottes are poor flyers and content to scratch around for a living and lay eggs. They're hardy and prosper in all states in Australia.

### CHECK THEM OUT

If all this sounds too good to be true, look for examples of the breed at shows in the months to come or visit their national show at Albury in June. Take a peek at the website http://members.ozemail.com.au/~whitewyandottes or join the Wyandotte Club of Australia Inc for just $15 a year. Send C/- Mrs Anne Anderson, RMB 5180, Peach Orchard Rd, Ourimbah 2258. There are branches in most states.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# A New Jam Season

by Cassandra Turnbull, Kingsholme, Qld.

Jamsetta – sold out. I couldn't believe it. We don't exactly live in the centre of jam-making country, nor was this really jam season. When I think of jam season, I think of apricots and plums. True, I was making jam, well jelly really, and lots of it: elderberry jelly, guava jelly and rosella jelly. Very nice it has been too. So I guess, since the local store sold out of Jamsetta and everyone else is making jam, it must be jam-making season.

This is the first season I have had enough elderberries to make jam. Before starting I looked in all my plant books and rang a few friends and relatives and asked them to check their plant books to make sure I wasn't boiling up some poisonous concoction. The jam/jelly is beautiful and the colour amazing. My tree is still full of flowers, so I am hoping I will get at least another three to six jars. I am also planning to put in a whole row of the trees, something I should have done years ago. The elderberry grows easily from cuttings, and my tree is growing very well, smack bang in the middle of my vegie patch – not the best of planning there.

## ELDERBERRY JELLY

I went out and picked all my berries, stem and all. Then, to get the berries off, I used a fork to push the berries from the stems.

1 lge bowl elderberries
water to cover the berries well
1 packet Jamsetta
approx 1 cup white sugar to each cup fruit mixture

Into a large pot, put your berries and water. Cook berries for about 30 minutes, boiling slowly. Keep an eye on the water level. You can start with as much water as you like in the pot, but this water will become your jelly, so keep at least three cups of water in the pot at all times. The water should reduce to no more than four cups.

Strain the juice from the pot. If you are really a die-hard jam maker, you probably have a jelly bag to strain your mixture through. This can even be left overnight to get all the moisture from the mixture. I, on the other hand, use two hand-held sieves with a clean cloth between them. This works pretty well for me, leaving my jelly very clear. I'm not too worried about getting all the moisture out either. If I get about three to four cups of mixture, I'm happy. The chooks get the rest.

Measure your mixture and return it to a clean pot on the stove. A general rule is: one cup of mixture needs one cup of sugar. However, I think that too much sugar makes the jam too sweet and sometimes overpowers the more subtle flavours of fruits such as elderberry, so I reduce the sugar. If I have four cups of mixture, I put in three cups of sugar, if I have three cups of mixture, I put in two cups of sugar.

Stir your mixture over medium heat until all the sugar is dissolved. Add Jamsetta and stir again until it has dissolved. One packet of Jamsetta does about three cups of mixture; if you have more mixture, you may need two packets of Jamsetta. More of this later.

Bring your jam to the boil and boil for about 5 minutes on high.

I test my jam to make sure it will set by placing a small amount on a teaspoon and putting it into the freezer on a saucer for a few minutes. If the mixture goes thick, it is ready to jar. If your mixture does not thicken, you need to add more Jamsetta and boil the mixture up again.

Make sure your jars are sterilised. I sterilise mine by boiling them up in a big pot directly before using them. In fact, they are usually still too hot to touch when I am pouring the jam into them. I give a lot of my jam away and the last thing I want to do is poison anyone!

If you have sealed all your jars and the next day when they are all cool you find that the mixture hasn't set, don't be afraid to return all the mixture to the pot and boil it up again with another lot of Jamsetta. This sometimes happens to me when I have made a very big batch of jam.

## GUAVA OR ROSELLA JELLY

To make either guava or rosella jelly, I follow the same directions as above. The only variations I make are the quantity of fruit. Into my big pot I cram as many rosellas or guavas as I can fit and I cut the guavas in half before putting them into the pot.

After trying these jellies you might have to adjust your jam-making season, as I have done, to include these very tasty fruits.

# Respect Your Elders

by Neville Jackson, Valhalla.

**The versatile elderberry deserves a place in any self-sufficiency garden. All its parts are useful and the myths surrounding it impart a special mystique.**

The products of the elder (or elderberry) tree, *Sambucus* spp., have been utilised for centuries. Hippocrates wrote of a purgative and also an ointment made from the green inner bark. Roots infused as a tea were prescribed for dropsy and he used dried or fresh flowers as a strained infusion for eye troubles. The entire tree has been used in medical and culinary applications and industrial tools and artefacts since medieval times, making the elder possibly the herb with the most recorded uses.

The elder tree was widely known as the medicine chest of country folk and featured in the myths and legends of numerous cultures. Elders are said to keep evil away from gardens and never to be struck by lightning. Another belief, still current in some areas, is that permission should be asked of the Earth Mother before taking cuttings or transplanting the tree.

## VARIETIES

There are many varieties of elder, though only a few are commonly cultivated.

• *Sambucus nigra*, the European or black elder from temperate parts of Europe, is commonly found in many areas of Australia. The Romans are credited with its widespread distribution in their former empire and it is now found worldwide in temperate and subtropical regions. The tree can reach 10 metres, but more commonly is a small tree with numerous suckers. It has creamy white flower bunches, called cymes, 13 – 20 centimetres across with a pleasant muscatel grape fragrance. The leaves are up to 13 centimetres long, toothed but soft. Dependent upon climate and nutrients available the tree can display autumn tones.

• *S. canadensis*, the American, golden or common elder, was originally found in Canada and eastern parts of USA. The berries are similar to those of the European, but larger and juicier. The four-metre shrub has bright green leaves, with down on the underside. Flowers are small, cymes are 10 – 20 centimetres across.

• *S. caerulea*, the blueberry elder from north-west USA, has blue-black berries, larger and juicier than those of *S. nigra*. It grows to three metres tall, with leaves 6 – 15 centimetres long. The yellow-white flower cymes are 10 – 15 centimetres across and have a muscatel scent and flavour in food and drink.

Of the following less well known varieties:

• *S. aurea* has golden yellow leaves and cherry red fruits,

• *S. maxima* is a vigorous grower with large leaves and cymes of flowers up to 45 centimetres,

• *S. xanthocarpa* has golden coloured berries,

• *S. racemosa* has inedible red berries and is sometimes known as stinking elder.

Other varieties have multicoloured foliage and are useful as windbreaks and screens. Berries vary in colour and can be white-green, golden, red or blue-black. The blue-black berries are best for any culinary use, a pleasant perfume being a guide to good fruit, especially if it has a muscatel fragrance.

## CULTIVATION

The elderberry is usually easy to grow and will tolerate a wide variety of care, soil and climate, although some varieties thrive best in temperate to subtropical areas with a humus-rich soil and plentiful moisture. The plant is cold tolerant, and light frost could change the mostly green foliage to autumn shades. Elder may be deciduous in colder areas.

Dependent upon confinement and nutrients, most elder varieties have the potential to be either a shrub or a small tree, though *S. caerulea* can reach 15 metres. Good soil and plentiful water will promote vigorous growth, especially of suckers. The European or black elder tends to sucker readily, but these shoots, if unwanted, are easily cut off at ground level in spring or autumn.

The softwood cuttings, taken in spring, can be bedded in damp sand and planted out after they have rooted. Hardwood cuttings, taken in late winter, should be 15 centimetres long and have several buds, at least one above the damp sand.

Rooted suckers can be planted out at any time, except if frost is expected. If a suckering variety is used as a windbreak, plant at three-metre intervals to allow for subsequent sucker growth to fill in spaces.

## USES

There are a multitude of uses for eldertree parts.

### Flowers

• Make elderflower champagne or wine (see below).

• Place flowers in muslin bag and add to apples and pears when being cooked for extra flavour.

• An old recipe for influenza was to make a tea from elderflower heads and a mint leaf. A cup each morning was recommended.

• Other edible flower uses include sorbet, tisane and vinegar.

• Flower heads can be dipped in light batter and browned or flowers

added to pikelet mixture.

• Herbal remedies include elder flower lotion, ointment, toilet water and sunburn lotion. Potpourri and sleep pillows help relieve nasal congestion.

• The muscatel fragrant flower heads are a bee attractant and result in excellent honey.

### Berries

Shiny green berries appear in late summer. In autumn they change to reddish-brown then black when ripe. To harvest ripe berries, cut flower heads from the bush and rake berries into a container with a fork, or freeze then shake off berries.

• Add elderberries to blackcurrant jams and jellies for a more rounded flavour, although they may overwhelm if used to excess.

• In days gone by a small amount of berry juice was given as a useful laxative, while berry juice was taken for colic.

• Elderberry wine was used for the relief of sciatic pain and mixed with port wine for rheumatic and neuralgic problems.

• A dye is obtained from the crushed and boiled berries (use soft water). Strain and freeze until required. For purple use alum mordant. For other shades such as blue-purple use chrome, for grey-purple, iron and for violet, tin.

## LEAVES

• The juice of crushed leaves repels aphids and caterpillers.

• Strewn leaves kept mice from the castle floor, combined with rue, tansy and wormwood they kept the flies out as well.

• A cooled infusion of leaves was dabbed on the face and hands as a fly and mosquito repellent.

• A poultice of warmed leaves in a cloth was used to relieve bruises, sprains and chilblains.

• The multicoloured foliage keeps and displays well in vases.

### Wood

• Many types of woodwind instruments have been made from elder wood, perhaps even the first panpipes. The pith is easily removed with a straight wire. Flutes and whistles were popular in Britain.

• The white close-grained mature wood was made into butchers' skewers,

needles for net making, slide rules, shoemakers' pegs and popguns.

### Elderflower Champagne

In cooler parts of Australia the flowers are ready for champagne at the end of November and the wine may be drunk at Christmas. Champagne made for only these few weeks is said to be quite drinkable, although not of high alcohol content.

6 – 8 elderflower heads
2 lemons sliced
2 tbsp cider vinegar
700 g white sugar
4.5 lt boiled water

Place flower heads and lemons in a clean bucket (plastic okay) and add water. Cover with a clean cloth. Leave to soak 24 – 36 hours. Strain through cotton sheeting. Add sugar and vinegar. Stir until sugar is dissolved, then pour into screw-top bottles. Leave tops loose for 14 days to allow excess gas to escape (otherwise bang!).

This 'champagne' stores for about three months, but is usually drunk before that!

### Elderflower Wine

600 ml flower heads
350 g honey
120 ml strong black tea (for tannin) cooled and strained
½ tsp yeast nutrient
10 g wine yeast
4.5 lt boiled water with juice of 2 lemons

Remove flowers from stems, wash well, place in clean bucket. Heat honey in 600 ml of the water until dissolved, then allow to cool. Pour over flowers with the lemon juice, cold tea, yeast nutrient and remainder of water. Start the yeast then add to bucket. Stir well, cover and leave in a warm place for 10 days. Stir twice daily. Strain, decant and store for at least six months.

### Elderberry Port

8 cups elderberries, without stalks
16 cups water
1 cup minced raisins
7 cups white sugar

Boil elderberries in the water for 20 minutes, strain and add sugar and raisins, pour into a clean bucket and allow to ferment for two weeks. Strain again into fermentation bottles with airlocks. Bottle only when all action has stopped. Store and let mature for 12 months (if you can).

**Note:** No metals except stainless steel should come into contact with any winemaking liquids and all equipment must be kept sterile.

## AUSSIE ELDERS

Many introduced elderberry varieties produce berries which are inedible, maybe even toxic, when fresh, so don't try to graze straight from the bush or to drink fresh juice. A pleasant fragrance in berries and flowers is a good indication of flavour.

There are some native Australian species which have flavoursome yellow berries: look for *Sambucus australasica* and *S. gaudichaudiana* at bush tucker nurseries.

Native elderberry plants are available from: Barung Landcare Nursery, ph: 07-5494-3151, fax: 07-5494-3141. Email: barung@sun.big.net.au

Native elderberry seed is available from: Spencer or Karen Shaw, Brush Turkey Enterprises, ph: 07-5494-3642. Email: brushturkey@myplace.net.au

## PLANT AN ELDER

As you can see, an elder variety deserves a place in every medium to large garden. Apart from their fragrance and useful parts they are a great benefit to pollinators and orchard aesthetics. Besides, the elder might entice the king of the fairies to ride past! Especially after an elderberry port tasting session.

# Repairing A Rusty Roof

by Ray Taylor, Darwin, NT.

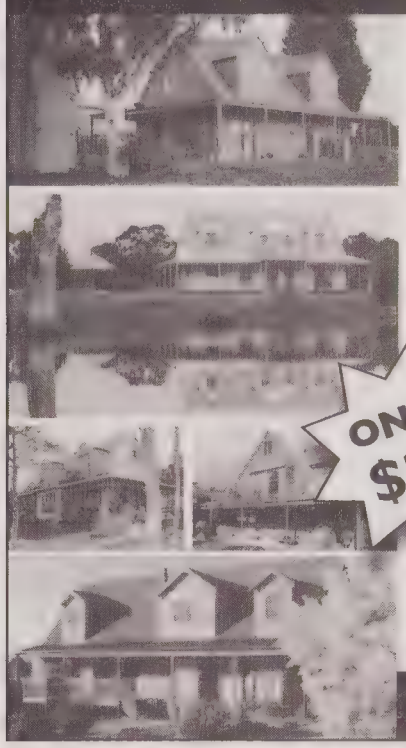
Our 30-year-old galvanised iron roof had developed cancer-like patches of rust. I scratched a marble-sized rust patch only to find it grow to saucer size. Up and down our street people had replaced their roofing iron for between three and four thousand dollars. I know because some of them gave me their old usable iron to make duck and chicken houses from.

I decided I was going to save money, get myself some exercise in the fresh air and use my DIY skills creatively by repairing the roof myself. Here's how it's done.

- Start with one patch; wire-brush and scrape it well.
- Paint the cleaned patch with clear liquid rust killer.
- Paint with the correct galvanised iron primer.
- Apply two coats of gloss roof paint.
- Go from spot to spot until all the roof is done.
- While you are up there clean out the spoutings.

Persistence pays. It's not hard work, just time consuming, but very dollar saving.


NEW PLANS BOOK! by Peter Lees – architect



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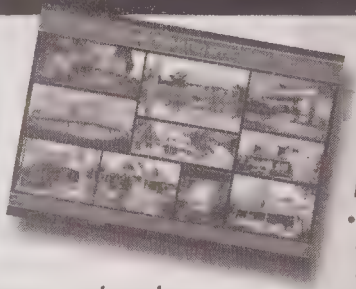

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# Livestock Health and Management

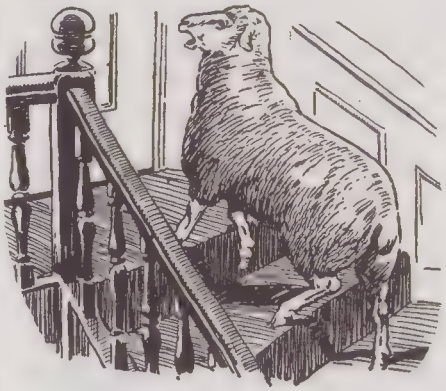
## Information You Need but Haven't Known Where to Ask

**If you have queries on any type of livestock send them in and we'll get our panel of experts to research the problem for you. Post them to Livestock Advice Page, Grass Roots, PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.**

### UNFRIENDLY RAM

We have a farm at Merricks and go there on weekends. There's a manager there during the week. I have a four-month-old bottle-fed male sheep and he's now back in the paddock with the other 13 sheep, but they're up one end and he's down the other. He's not mixing with them. My heart breaks and I go and get him; he's then so happy and we garden all weekend, then I put him back in the paddock at night and he's not happy. Is this wrong? Should I just leave him alone over there and hope that time will make him join the others? Have you had any experience with this problem with rejected bottle-fed sheep.

**Madelene Alford,**
**RICHMOND 3121.**



*Your problem with the pet lamb is not uncommon and is distressing to human and beast. Some recent research on sheep will help explain the predicament. They are capable of recognising and remembering a number of human and sheep faces. Your fellow simply doesn't relate to the woolly faces in the paddock. It's time to help him claim his ovine origins. First, however: is there a particular reason why he hasn't been castrated? Male pets, especially rams and bulls, are renowned for turning nasty and, as they have no fear of humans, the habit of running to you turns at some stage into running at you. Unless he is spectacular and of significant lineage, organise for him to be castrated. As well, you are going to have to ease him into becoming a flock member. One recommendation is to pen or put him into a separate paddock with another sheep. The isolated flock sheep will become lonely and turn to him as a fellow sheep and, provided you don't try and integrate the two back into the major flock too quickly, bonding will occur. It will be easier if you use another young sheep, even going so far as to buy in a lamb for company. It is necessary you don't vie with the newcomer for the pet's affection – he must be allowed to assume sheep behaviour so he has a happy and well adjusted life. Cut the ties slowly and the outcome will be successful.*

### MY DRAKE KEEPS BITING

I have a Muscovy drake which is very friendly and loves to be patted and picked up. He is lovely, but he keeps attacking me when I turn my back. I flap my arms and this tends to shoo him away, but the attacking bit really gives me a fright.

Is there anything I can do? Someone said to get him a duck but I don't want an army of these ducks attacking me! Is this a Muscovy thing? I've had lots of other types of ducks and never had this problem. He loves our dogs and insists on going into their yard. We have another drake with a crook leg, but he is a different breed. They get on okay. We don't have any other poultry.

I would appreciate any advice and help as I feel as if I can't walk around our yard without a big stick. He loves to walk with us, but every now and again he attacks the back of my legs.

**Robyne Kerr,**
**SNUG 7054.**

*It is very difficult to make pets from male birds or animals; they inevitably turn aggressive and create problems. Your drake is no exception. He has enjoyed growing up as a special pet and now isn't sure how he should treat you. The attacking and biting results from this confusion and is likely to get worse as the months go by. You have to make a decision: maintain the current pet status and its inherent problems, or allow him to gather a small harem and bond with them. This latter is what he needs, and he will be kept so busy chasing ducks and showing off to them that he will lose interest in maintaining power plays with your legs. Two or three ducks would be an appropriate number. If you don't want to breed from them and end up with a large flock, remove eggs from setting ducks at night and destroy them. Muscovy ducks are very prone to broodiness, but aside from this are easy to manage. They're unfailingly good natured, bright, cunning and a good match for your mixed-up drake.*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# ECO NEWS

### POLLUTION CLEAN-UP NEEDED

The University of South Australia is recruiting Masters and PhD students in environmental risk assessment and remediation to address the urgent need to clean up an estimated 100,000 polluted sites across the nation. The five-billion-dollar job requires approximately 1000 environmental analysts and there is currently a major shortfall of suitably qualified people, which is one of the main limiting factors preventing remediation. Most of the polluted sites needing to be cleaned up are unsealed and gradually leaching their cocktail of chemicals into groundwater and the broader environment. As time goes by and current problems are addressed, the task of future environmental scientists will need to be more focused on designing systems that neutralise or eliminate waste during the actual manufacturing process.

### GREY NURSE SHARK THREAT

With only about 300 individuals remaining in the ocean off eastern Australia, the grey nurse shark is thought to be Australia's most critically endangered marine animal. Some research indicates that in as little as six years the population may have reached quasi-extinction – less than 50 females – a level from which sustainability is virtually impossible. The grey nurse has been listed as a protected species under NSW Fisheries legislation since 1984, but numbers are still declining as a result of commercial and recreational fishing activities. Of the 19 important habitat zones along the east coast, 13 are in NSW waters. The NSW government is being called on to establish a 1500-metre no-take sanctuary around all critical habitats in NSW waters to reduce accidental catching of sharks and protect their food supply. The Queensland State Government and the Commonwealth have already increased the level of protection for the grey nurse in waters under their control.

### HERBICIDE RESISTANCE

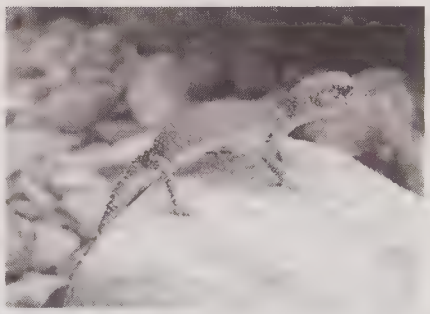
Ryegrass resistance to glyphosate is worsening across Australia, with 38 documented populations being known in April 2004. A spokesperson from the WA Herbicide Resistance Initiative has been reported as claiming that genetically modified crops supposed to reduce chemical use will probably lead to increased ryegrass resistance. An American member of WAHRI has reported that his experience in that country showed Roundup Ready canola required greater glyphosate use and that resistance is spreading fast.

### ORGANICS FOR BIODIVERSITY

An independent study reported in the October 2004 issue of *New Scientist* magazine found that on organic farms biodiversity was greater at every level of the food chain from bacteria to birds and mammals. The study examined data from Europe, Canada, New Zealand and the US. Researchers concluded that wildlife-friendly habitat management, non-use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers and mixed arable and livestock farming practised by organic farmers aided biodiversity. Mixed farming was found to particularly benefit some bird species, such as the lapwing whose numbers have declined by 80 percent in England and Wales since the 1960s as a result of intensive agriculture. Foraging activity of bats was 84 percent higher on organic farms, and two species were only found on organic farms.

### FLINDERS RANGES BOUNCE BACK

Bounceback is a project that began in 1997 to address a range of environmental problems in an area that incorporates the Flinders, Gammon and Olary Ranges. Habitat had deteriorated as a result of overgrazing, weed infestations and introduced feral animals. Some mammals, including the brush-tailed bettong, had become locally extinct and the threatened yellow-footed rock wallaby was continuing to decline. Since the beginning of the project the Federal Government has contributed $1.75 million and the South Australian State Government has more than matched this. There has been much support from the local community and landholders, voluntary organisations, Flinders University and the Adelaide Zoo. A shooting association has helped with feral goat control and Conservation Volunteers Australia has assisted with species monitoring. A massive reduction in pest species' populations has led to improved habitat. There is already a noticeable increase in the yellow-footed rock wallaby population as well as in other native species such as the barking gecko. Project manager Damien Pearce has attributed the project's success to date to the cooperative efforts of the range of people involved and looks forward to the day, maybe 20 years away, when the locally extinct brush-tailed bettong and the bilby can be reintroduced.



Flinders Ranges wildlife, courtesy Dept For Conservation and Heritage (SA).

### FOREST PROTECTED

The Victorian Trust for Nature and the world's largest conservation group, the Nature Conservancy, have bought the logging rights to a significant area of temperate rainforest in the Strzelecki Forest. The land will now be protected by covenants.

# FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

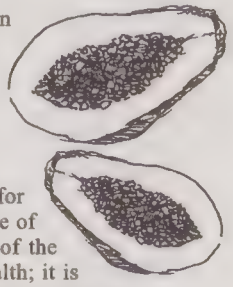
**Dear GR,**

I never use new timber in my recycling projects, however, the wood I do use is quite good stuff but generally has nails and staples in it so care must be taken in removing them. Recently I missed one and the blade had to be sent in for sharpening. I've now invested in a metal detector.

A Scottish friend informed me recently that the old-timers are still hanging in there working their allotments, however, more younger folk are taking up plots as organic believers (his words), with waiting lists in many areas. He didn't mention what the rentals are. It might be interesting to find out, via the magazine, what German readers did during the war years to make do; there could be a lesson or two we can still find useful today.

**Alan Stewart,**
**12 Weymouth Pl, ALEXANDRA HILLS 4161.**

**Dear Grass Roots,**



A friend showed me the letter written in one of your mags from a few years ago about the healing of a lady with elephantiasis in the Solomon Islands. This letter was written by Jane Smith and it showed another 100 percent **HEALING WITH PAWPAW**.

I have been working with the pawpaw for quite a few years now and it is truly a tree of miracles. One day this tree will be one of the main things that will be used for our health; it is only a matter of time. I have been using the fruit, seed, leaf and ointment of this tree with great success over the last eight years. It is all about protein in our diseases and how the enzyme papain in the pawpaw breaks these proteins down.

To maintain good health I decided to eat the fruit of a quarter of an average size pawpaw per day. I have this at night after dinner, so it can work on anything that might have happened to come into my body during the day. It also keeps the bacteria levels and cholesterol in my body at a low level.

At certain times I have used the leaf and seeds to give me a boost. The seeds are in every pawpaw and should not be wasted. Instead of throwing them in the bin, use them in your cooking. For an average family of four use four heaped dessertspoons of seed broken up in a blender. Just add a bit of water to them and crush them up. Put this in your soups, stews and casseroles. The seed has a lot of papain enzyme in it and is of great benefit to you all.

There is a lot more to tell you about pawpaw; if you have any questions please contact me.

**Robert Clark,**
**4/8 Batchelor Rd, GYMPIE 4570.**

**Dear GRs,**

I spent a lot of time in outback NSW and Queensland in my early years. Memories are still with me of homesteads made of corrugated iron; as soon as the sun set they cooled down. Another good simple design I noticed was the breezeway idea, which is a wide covered area separating the bedrooms and kitchen and other rooms. It is important to study the breeze direction before building.

Almost 60 years ago I remember my mother using a drip or Coolgardie safe. For people starting on their dream block it might be worth considering if you have limited power and ample water. From memory, it was a gauze-enclosed wooden frame with a water tray on top covered in hessian. The water was syphoned by strips of hessian from the sides. It would be easier to make something similar today with items obtained from the hardware shop, such as irrigation pipe with very small holes.

Last year Allie from Barmera was asking about a slow combustion stove recovered from the dump. Firstly, an Everhot is not an Aga. I cooked on an Aga over 40 years ago. To conserve fuel, most of the cooking was done in one of the four ovens. Because these stoves, whether they are Aga, Everhot, or Lightburn, are slow combustion, they are designed to keep the heat in. If Allie has a reasonable supply of wood, I think it would be more economical than gas. The stove can be closed down and uses very little wood; one large piece will last all night.

Let me finish with a hint: Use Silver Star starch as mouse bait.

Readers may be interested in contacting Trendline Publishing Company, PO Box 1353, Rozelle, NSW 2039. They can send out a small catalogue of do-it-yourself plans such as welders, compressors, camping stoves and water diviners; most are made from recycled material.

**Percy Woods,**
**PO Box 26, BARALABA 4702.**

**Dear GR,**

Thanks for a wonderful magazine; I love to read each one cover to cover. I come from a large family, so there's always lots of kids running around. I would like to build a puppet stand. I know how to build the stand, I think, but I'm unsure on how to **MAKE PAPIER-MÂCHÉ PUPPETS**. Does anyone have any information on this? Also, what's an easy and cheap way to do the backdrops for the stand? I'm hoping I can keep the kids entertained at holiday times. I will reply to all letters. Keep up the good work GR.

**Lana Raso,**
**1/62 Blundell Blvd, TWEED HEADS SOUTH 2486.**

*There were instructions for making a cute and easy puppet theatre in GR 124.*

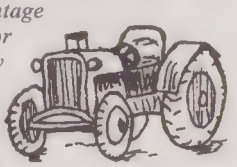
**Dear GR,**

Thank you for the good magazine. It is very informative and helpful. I've recently purchased a five-acre allotment in south-east Queensland and I intend building a house on it in due course. I am interested in obtaining a used wood stove and a slow combustion heater in good order and at the lowest possible price.

With the property came a **FERGUSON TE20 PETROL TRACTOR**, but no service manual. Would anyone have information about a **USED WORKSHOP MANUAL** for this tractor for sale?

I'm also seeking **QUANDONG SEEDS** for propagation, as well as a few **TAGASASTE SEEDS**. If anyone can help, it would be most appreciated. Of course, I am willing to pay for them.

**Nathaniel,**
**PO Box 5522, TORQUAY 4665.**



*There are many people interested in vintage tractors so help may be forthcoming for your grey Fergie. In fact there is a grey Fergie tractor muster held each year; the last info we received was on the 2003 event which was held at Bendermeeer, New England. Perhaps a reader from that area can chase up details for you. As well, the Caboolture Historical Village runs a vintage machinery rally in June each year. Contact the Caboolture Historical Society, Beerburram Rd, Caboolture 4510 for more details. They may also be able to put you in touch with Fergie enthusiasts who can help you obtain a manual.*

**Dear Grass Roots,**

Tired of trying to find your mag on the stands – have to subscribe. Have you tried the beaut fruit cake recipe from Marjorie Bligh of Devonport (GR 165)? If you haven't, better get cracking – best cake ever, and so easy.

**Patsy.**

# FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

**Dear GR Readers,**

Wendy Elliott's delightful article 'Sexing Eggs' (GR 165) and her subsequent exercise in determining the **SEX OF HER UNBORN BABIES** brought back some pleasant memories of when we did the 'wedding ring over the tummy' sex test at the time of my first pregnancy eight years ago. Similar to Wendy's description of a sewing needle threaded with a long piece of cotton, the wedding ring is used in the same way.

About midway through my pregnancy we decided to try this method, mainly for a bit of fun. Each time we did this experiment, it kept indicating a boy. However, towards the end of my pregnancy, we decided to try the ring-test just one more time, and to our surprise it suddenly indicated a girl. But then it went completely haywire and couldn't seem to make up its mind at all one way or the other! Then finally, much to our delight and total surprise, we had a beautiful, healthy baby girl. So perhaps the sewing needle method is more accurate than the wedding ring. But then again, we tried the wedding ring method during my second (and last) pregnancy six years ago, and once again it indicated a boy, and a boy it was!

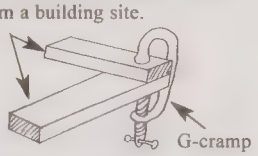
**Heather Golding,**
**126 Cliff Barrons Rd, UPPER ORMEAU 4208.**

**Dear GRs,**

When I am out driving and see a house being built I take note of what stage it is at. When the framework is well progressed, I'll wander in and talk to the builder or head honcho and ask if they have any scraps of **LEFTOVER TIMBER**, explaining that I like to do odd jobs around the house. It is alarming what often gets discarded and later burned. There are usually lots of other odds and ends too. They are glad to get rid of the leftovers and save a fee at the tip. If anything looks as if it shouldn't be on the rubbish pile, I will always ask if it was really thrown out. I have scored many good power tools that only needed new brushes or a repair to the handle. Amazing what gets thrown away! From this unbelievable stack of timber and so forth I have used most around the house and saved a heap.

When cutting things with a handsaw or hacksaw it pays to be able to hold the job firmly so that you don't break a hacksaw or cut your finger. Two scraps of 100 x 50-millimetre timber held together with a clamp can make the job so much easier.

100 x 50 mm timber saved from a building site.




You can then, with another clamp, secure this simple cutting jig to something substantial. The cutting angle can be adjusted at the G-cramp and the whole jigger can be carried in the ute or tractor permanently. I am constantly using mine for all sorts of cutting jobs.

In the 1950s, even the late 1940s, water conservation, soil conservation and the **VALUE OF TREES** were taught in schools, and films showing the devastation of soil erosion were regularly shown. What did that achieve? Has there been a big change since then? How many trees have been chopped down? How much soil has been blown into the Pacific Ocean? Could anyone even guess?

The Garden of Eden mentioned in the Bible was said to be in the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in south-west Asia (Iraq) and was said to be the original beautiful heaven on earth. Now it is more like hell on earth and a virtual desert by comparison. Will Australia continue to follow this trend? Maybe one day everyone will remember what they were told in school.

In 1958 a scientific study of diesel fumes found that these caused cancer in rats, but not humans. Who believed that one? In 2004 the official line is the same. It's well documented that carcinogens abound in diesel fuels, whether it's out of the ground or made from recycled cooking oils. Soon diesel fuels will have to comply with new standards for levels of sulphur and particulates. These particles, which leave an oily black residue over you, your clothes, your lungs even, are worse near main roads of course. Many other carcinogens are present in diesel fumes, so it comes as a surprise to hear that several cities are proposing freeways through the CBD (Albury and Coffs Harbour to name just two in NSW). The public wants the freeways to bypass the town centres, but the 'experts' argue that diesel fumes don't hurt anybody. Nothing changes, especially stupid logic. You must not think laterally it would seem.

Beetroots are a much overlooked vegetable in traditional English-style cooking. They are often very big and old by the time they hit the supermarket shelves and by this stage their leaves are old, thoroughly tough and inedible. It really pays to grow your own and harvest while quite small and young when their leaves are very tender and delicious. **BEET GREENS** (leaves) are high in vitamins B, A, E and K, calcium, potassium and antioxidants which strengthen your immune system. To cook: wash and cut into three-centimetre pieces. Simmer for 10 minutes in filtered or distilled water and serve with lemon juice and a good green virgin olive oil; season as you like. Greens can be substituted for carrots in cakes. Beet greens, of course, can be cooked with the more familiar roots, like young carrots and their tops. Baked with other root vegies in the oven, beets make a tasty morsel. Beetroot soup (borscht) is a staple entrée or meal in Germany where beets were cultivated from the 1500s.

**Roberino,**
**PO Box 356, WOOLGOOLGA 2456.**

**Dear Grass Roots,**

I recently wrote offering readers free **LOOFAH SEEDS**. I thought you would be interested to know that I have received nearly 100 replies! It has been quite overwhelming! And still the requests are arriving. Letters have come from all over Australia. A reader from Tasmania sent me some beautiful honey blossom and goat's milk handmade soaps. I have heard from some truly amazing people. It is wonderful to know that the interest in growing loofahs is so strong and people are willing to give it a go. Thank you GR for publishing my previous letter, which has enabled so many people to receive their seeds.

**Deborah Stephens,**
**2/9-13 Lonerganne St, GARBUTT 4814.**

**Dear Grass Roots,**

To Iris Tirkkonen: a **BLUE QUANDONG** tree can be located at Nielsen's Native Nursery at Loganholme. They actually have a variety of *Elaeocarpus* in stock.

To Jennica McShane who would like to convert her dog to a vegetarian diet: You have a choice to be a vegetarian, your dog does not. Your dog will survive quite well on a vegetarian diet, but it is not natural and it is not healthy. Look at your dog's teeth – they are and always were meat eaters. Don't force your lifestyle choice onto an innocent animal who relies on you. Trying to imitate an animal's natural diet and lifestyle is the healthiest choice.

This is the first time I have written to any magazine, but I would like to say to GR: keep up the good work; it is an extremely informative magazine.

**D Whyburn,**
**BUCCAN 4207.**

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

# FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

**Dear Grass Roots,**

My partner and I are seeking the help of the GR readers in **FINDING A PLACE** for ourselves and our two young children (Sam 3½ and Tara 1½) to live. We have learnt much for our young years (just shy of 30) and don't seek worldly riches, but rather life riches through happiness, self-understanding, appreciation for the simple things in life and a life spent growing and watching our children grow.

A year ago now, we left our acreage home and my partner's government job in the railways, gave all of our possessions to charity (bar the basics that fit in our old Ford), packed ourselves, our kids and our dog in the car and went WWOOFing. We had little money and no family or financial fall-back. It was scary but fun and we have met so many different people and learnt so much from all of them. We acted as house-sitters and caretakers in many places and contributed to many projects and have gathered lots of useable practical knowledge about building houses, alternative power systems, and land and animal care practices.

Due to the youth of our children, and my unplanned pregnancy, we have decided that it is time to settle for a while and put some of our knowledge to work for our family. We have a small deposit for a property and have begun searching, but have had trouble finding anything in the price range that we are able to borrow (finance companies are not keen on giving us more than $40,000 due to our unstable home and work conditions). We hope for a vendor-finance arrangement, but can't seem to learn how exactly to find out about them, although we know they are out there. We are willing to wait a while until there is a drop in the real estate prices, but in the meantime we need somewhere to live.

We are currently living in a very hot shed with no running or hot water, no toilet or bathing facilities and no relief from the dirt and heat for our kids. If anyone can please help us at all with accommodation that is more acceptable for a pregnant woman and two young children, please contact us. A caretaking position would be great. Or if anyone knows of any owner-finance properties available or how to go about finding them, please contact us. Or if anyone has any properties, with cottage/house for sale in the vicinity of $50,000 purchase price, please contact us. We are very flexible, honest and common sense people with great work and personal references and will make a go of any arrangements or opportunities that are presented to us.

We really want to provide ourselves and our family a self-sustainable way of life that is physically, mentally and spiritually positive for us and all involved. We have no family support and really just need someone to help us get started.

Perhaps readers even have some alternative options that maybe we haven't thought of. We trust in our true intentions and that the universe will provide for us. We are appreciative of any help anyone can offer.

**Vanessa Stewart,**
**C/- 376 Glens Creek Rd, NYMBOIDA 2460.**
**Ph: 0423-922-180.**
**Email: pixisamgalaxy@yahoo.com.au**

**Dear GR Readers,**

It's taken me 22 enjoyable years of GR reading to finally send in a letter of my own. We (Angie 40, Steve 36, Sharnee 4, Jamaya 3 and Cooper 4½ months) are **MOVING TO COPMANHURST,** near Grafton, NSW. We've bought 60 acres with a house to lock-up on it. The house was quite run-down so Steve, his dad and uncle have been madly repairing, wiring, insulating, lining and painting (with three littlies I have my own hands full!).

Now we are almost ready to move in and I would like to invite any mums in the Copmanhurst/Grafton area who have young kids or babies and enjoy the GR lifestyle (especially gardening), a cuppa or glass of wine and a good laugh at life to drop me a line. Also please write if you live locally and can let me know any of the following: What fruit trees do well in the area? Problems with frost? Could I grow any subtropical or tropical fruit trees? Where can I buy Barnevelder or Australorp chooks, a milking doe in kid and a small dairy cow? Is there an organic produce market around Grafton? Any good activities or places for young kids? Anything else of grassy interest? Thanking you all.

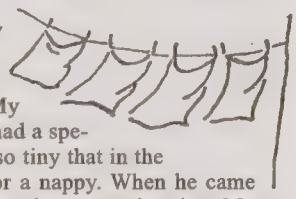
**Angie Rawson,**
**53 Stockyard Creek Rd, COPMANHURST 2460.**

**Dear Megg & Mary,**

After reading the article on **HOMEMADE DEODORANT**, I thought I would send my simple and effective recipe. The strength can be worked out by individuals. Sieve several times equal quantities of bicarb soda and arrowroot powder and put in a plastic jar with a hole pierced in the lid as a dispenser. I have also made it with one-third bicarb and two-thirds arrowroot with no difference in effectiveness noted. It is excellent. Full-strength bicarb may irritate, but this never does and does not mark clothing. As 'talcum' powder I use arrowroot placed in a plastic jar with a pierced lid or an old powder dispenser.

**Mrs B O'Hare,**
**PO Box 1, WILGA 6243.**

**Dear GRs,**



Although I am way past the baby stage (my baby is 17 now), I enjoyed reading Leah Johnson's **ARTICLE ABOUT NAPPIES**. My baby was 11 weeks premature, so I had a special situation on my hands. He was so tiny that in the hospital they used a sanitary pad for a nappy. When he came home I had to find my own answers to the nappy situation. My brand-new nappies looked more like a bunny rug on him. I found good thick flannelette nappy material by the metre and sewed my own; they had to be a quarter of the size of a normal nappy. It was many months before he could wear the ones I bought.

Because of developmental delay he was in nappies much longer, so I resorted eventually to a night-time disposable and the old prem nappies came in handy as an additional liner. I was washing nappies way longer than most mothers for one baby, but never found it a hassle. Like Leah said, you need a routine and it all works fine.

When finally the nappy stage was over I felt quite satisfied with myself at avoiding the disposables habit that contributes to so much landfill. Washing nappies is so necessary that I never felt guilty about the water I used because I was conservative with it in many other ways, but Leah's method of soaking in the rinsing water is a good idea.

At the end of the day when your baby is over the nappy stage, disposables will have emptied your hip pocket and harmed the environment, but if you used cloth nappies you ended up with a lifetime's supply of wonderful cleaning rags and a very useful large plastic bucket with a lid – I keep all my horse brushes in mine!

**Carol Gillham,**
**WENSLEYDALE 3241.**

**Dear Megg & Co,**

About a year or two ago someone in Feedback gave a recipe for **TOMATO SOUP**, which they guaranteed was great. I made it and it was A1, however, I sold my Brookton property and haven't been able to find the magazine since. I'm hoping whoever shared his/her prize recipe might read this and send it to me.

**Joan Thompson,**
**PO Box 134, CUBALLING 6311.**

# FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

**Dear GR,**

I am trying to gather information on **ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE COMMUNITIES**, or where there are towns with a lot of alternative living people in south-west Australia. I've heard there are some in Denmark. Margaret River I believe is too expensive, a bit like Byron Bay – was good years ago but out of a battler's budget now. Could you steer me towards where to look or how to get info please, as I am looking to follow my dream and live out of mainstream society. I'd like to meet similar open-minded people.

Cockroach tip: I heard it on ABC radio last year, sent in by a listener. Clean cupboards thoroughly and place cucumber peels here and there. They don't like it. Worked for me. Replace when dry and wrinkled.

**Paul Whitty,**
**Unit 4/72 Boundry Rd, MANDURAH 6210.**

**Dear Megg, Mary & Readers,**

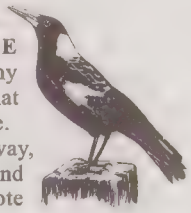
Regarding **SEXING CHICKENS**, I don't know if this works or not as I've never tried it: years ago I was told by an old person that to get female chickens set rounded eggs and for males set the pointed ones.

To Gary Larkin (GR 164): To make **BLACKBERRY BRANDY** put about four kilograms of berries with enough water to cover in a large boiler and boil for 30 minutes. Strain. To every eight cups of juice add one kilogram sugar, two tablespoons each of cinnamon, cloves and allspice. Boil all together for five minutes, cool and add 600 millilitres of brandy. Bottle and seal. Leave for two months then drink.

A **HONEY DRINK** can be made with two cups of honey, three large lemons sliced thinly. Pour on 18 cups of boiling water and stir well. When just warm add half a cup of yeast. Next day, bottle and cork tightly. Ready to drink in three days. I find plastic lemonade bottles good to use for drinks like this.

To Mary Mathews (GR 164): Thank you very much for the words of the Dog's Plea – beautiful. I heat a large stone and wrap it in a towel for my dog when it's cold at night. On hot days I wash his head and body with a wet cloth and put a fan on for him. He is 15 in April (105 in our years); I'm only 82, so he deserves to be loved and cared for. His name is Clancy Parcels, Clancy from Clancy of the Overflow, because as a pup he overflowed everywhere, and the Parcels you can work out for yourself.

To Roberino (GR 163): Thank you for your always very interesting letters. Paint a face on the back of your hard hat; I've never had any **MAGPIE TROUBLE** since I painted one on the back of my straw hat. After a while you don't even need a hat as they seem to be scared off and leave you alone.



To Cookie (GR 163): If ever you're down this way, call in for a cuppa and a natter. I read your letter and felt that I had written it, as everything you wrote struck chords with me, even to the mountain top.

The lady who wrote to me some time ago wanting a 1979 winter GR might like to write again as I have a spare if she still wants one as well as a number of others she might like.

**Shirl,**
**Modella Rd, LONGWARRY 3816.**

**Hello Everyone,**

I thought I would let people know the **DANGERS OF ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES** that we take for granted. They can be very dangerous when they heat up and then ignite. We are very lucky to be alive! We had an electrical fire that started in the video recorder. The fire investigators told me they are a very common cause of fires and I have not spoken to anyone who turns the video off at the wall.

We got up around 6.30am and Dad said, 'Can you smell smoke?' I sure could. I ran down to the hall door and the lounge room was on fire, it was just a billowing ball of black smoke with the ceiling and all the curtains alight.

I shut the door and rang 000 and grabbed hold of Dad and how we managed to get out I don't know. I had the hose near the back door and I thought that if I could put the curtains out and the ceiling it would stop it from spreading, which I managed to do. By then the fire brigade had just arrived, but unbeknownst to me the smoke was pouring out of the roof as it had got into the cavity and into the corner of the roof in the lounge room. Anyway, they ripped the tiles off the roof and managed to put it out. We were very lucky as there is around $35 – $40,000 damage. We have to get one complete wall replaced and new carpets, curtains and entertainment system. We have been in one heck of a mess with the smell and the chemical smell of the burning plastics. It was a real disaster close to Christmas.

However, we are alive and had it started earlier the smoke would have killed us in our sleep.

**Gary Phillips,**
**GULGONG 2832.**

**Dear GRs,**

I've been diagnosed with **VASO MOTOR IDIOPATHIC RHINITUS**. Is there any natural way to clear nasal mucus? I've already tried sprays and pills to no avail. I find nasal congestion becomes worse after eating a fatty or sugary meal. Can anyone help?

**CAN HAIR BE REGROWN** on a thinning scalp? I've had skin lesions removed and hope someone can recommend a natural method to stop further hair loss as well as promoting new growth.

**Tony Crossley,**
**PO Box 420, MOUNT GRAVATT 4122.**
**Email: tonycrossley@yahoo.com**

**Dear GR Readers,**

I'm asking readers who live in the southern half of Western Australia to take part in **A SURVEY FOR MY PHD RESEARCH**. I need people who have lived in a rural area all their lives and people who have moved from an urban area to a rural area.

The survey is anonymous and no person, place or organisation will be identified, and it asks only for basic personal demographics. The survey asks the reasons why you moved to your area if you are not a local. It asks people what they like about living in a rural area. It asks what difficulties, problems and shortcomings you have encountered. It asks how you are working to overcome these difficulties. It asks what support you offer to newcomers in your area.

The survey is online at http://www.csu.edu.au/research/crsr/survey/

It allows about fives lines for each answer. Or you can phone for a copy of the survey – Helen on 0417-984-577 – or write to me. I'll be back in Albany, WA, from January and will be handing out surveys from Denmark outwards. I would love to catch up with GR people. A great year to you all.

**Helen Byles-Drage,**
**Charles Sturt University,**
**Locked Bag No 678, WAGGA WAGGA 2678.**
**Email: hdrage@csu.edu.au**

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

# FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

**Dear GRs,**

Kirsty has asked for a recipe for **HONEY BREAD**. I'll give you a recipe from *Constance Spry's Cookery Book*, which I think you should be able to find at the library because it is something like a cooking bible.

I hope that the following recipe is the one you are looking for. You need 225 grams flour, 100 grams sugar, 100 grams honey, 1 cup hot water, 1 teaspoon baking power or bicarbonate of soda. Mix flour with the sugar in a bowl. Melt honey in the water and add it to sugar and flour. Mix thoroughly. Bake slowly for about one hour. Spices or grated lemon rind may be added. This type of cake should be served in thin, buttered slices.

**Heidi Macha,**
**PO Box 2154, ASHGROVE WEST 4060.**

**Dear Megg, Mary & Readers,**

Oh dear, I did not think my letter in GR 165 would cause such a stir in so many readers. I have eight letters in front of me that are full of wonderful information. I've already answered 22, but my poor old thumbs can't write any more so I want to thank you all via this wonderful magazine. Thank you Marg Mansfield, Marion Bourke, Pat Atkins, Robyn Leah, Pam Wabbie, Lurline Thorp, Maureen Pear and David and Heather Tippett.

I hope all you folk I sent my books to received them in good order. I'm also glad you had success with the recipe I supplied.

It seems that all the **READERS OF *GRASS ROOTS* ARE FULL OF KNOWLEDGE**. I am very impressed with your solutions to cure my aching ears and thumbs and intend to try them all.

I wonder how many of you started attending Christmas dinners in November. It was so simple when I was a child. One Christmas dinner on 25 December, one lot of gifts that morning and a gift on your birthday and that was it. Now there's gifts every time Mum goes shopping and most are rubbish and not educational.

Night-time was bedtime, now, night-time is for knocking over fences, pulling up shrubs, breaking and entering with no respect for anyone. Nowadays you have to padlock everything or lose it. But there are still millions of wonderful, caring people in this world. There is always someone ready to help me when the job is too big for me to tackle.

I get great pleasure in giving and share my lovely garden with all of my friends as I always have plenty of plants over when I'm dividing. And I reward people who are kind to me, or give me good service, by giving them my books. I also give them to charities, old people's homes, schools etc. It's a great feeling to give something to someone. It was a great thrill for me when I answered the door and a complete stranger (Mrs Margaret Roberts) said, 'We are in Tassie from WA for a holiday and didn't know your address till I read it in *Grass Roots*'.

**Marjorie Bligh,**
**163 Madden St, DEVONPORT 7310.**

**Dear GR Readers & of course the Wonderful Staff,**

**HEAD LICE TREATMENT**: Fill a spray bottle ¾ full with water, add a capful of tea tree oil and a few squirts of a heavy white conditioner. Shake well before use. Spray on hair morning and night and comb through. Also, when rinsing hair after normal shampooing and conditioning don't rinse all the conditioning lotion out.

My daughter has never had lice in 10 years of schooling, with children around her often having them. Because she has very curly hair I always overconditioned her hair to stop tangles and used water and conditioner spray to keep her hair tidy. When there was an outbreak of lice in her kindergarten class all those years ago, I added the tea tree oil as a precaution. The lice don't seem to like the silky hair shafts from heavy conditioner and tea tree oil would turn anything off moving in.

I recently gave this recipe to a mother who had unsuccessfully tried a lot of chemical treatments on her young daughter who was plagued with the biggest lice I've ever seen. This worked and best of all it is cheap.

**Jeanette Emery,**
**PO Box 42, CAMPBELL TOWN 7210.**

**Dear Megg, Mary & GR Family,**

Sometime in the middle of this year (18 July, 2005 – at the latest) I'm going to be released from prison. My first priority – after I've caught up with all those family members and friends who have supported me over the past few years – will be to find suitable housing and employment. The region that I will wish to live and work in will be Eaglehawk (Vic). This is because I will need to be close to my place of spiritual learning.

The work that I wish to be employed in will, hopefully, be earth-based – organic farming, permaculture, bushland regeneration etc. It should be waste neutral, ethical in every sense and good for the spirit of all beings.

I'm not too fussed about housing. A run-down cottage in need of repairs sounds fine. Some room for chooks and a vegie patch would be good, and close proximity to a clean water source would be a great advantage. Electricity and telephone optional.

I'm a hard worker and I've accumulated many skills. I have plenty of references from people I've WWOOFed with prior to coming to prison. I'm a vegetarian and I don't drink, smoke or consume intoxicating substances.

I'm not looking for charity nor pity. All I'm looking for is a start. I have experience caretaking and I'm respectful of all cultures and religions. I have much love to give and plenty of ideas to share. My health is excellent and my mental acuity is keen. I'm very interested in LETS, MOs and ICs. I've only recently tapped into my creative self through throwing pots and drawing. I'm looking forward to a very bright and happy future.

If any of the above strikes a chord, drop me a line and speak your mind.

Dear Heather, re meat rabbits (GR 166): You could try the Livestock column in the *Weekly Times*. Often breeders are advertised there.

Dear Margaret, re multiple occupancy dwellings around Sydney: You could get a copy of the Intentional Communities Directory from WWOOF Australia (www.wwoof.com.au). In it you will find much information.

Finally, thank you to all at GR. Without the beautiful life concepts that you promote, life would have been just that little bit more challenging these past few years. Hello to Dorithi, Lilian, Terri and Laura. Thanks for your warm and generous support too. And thanks to my beautiful family and friends, whom I one day hope to repay with surplus organic fruit and veg.

**Mark Chesterfield,**
**PO Box 431, ARARAT 3377.**

**Dear Readers,**

As a cattle farmer I buy bagged feed cubes for my cattle during winter and as a result I end up with hundreds of used only-once 30- or 40-kilogram **BAGS**. The cubes are grain based and contain no nasty ingredients, so surely someone out there can use them for something, rather than me taking them to my local landfill. Give me a call – let's get together on this one.

**Don Allen,**
**DELEGATE RIVER via ORBOST 3888.**
**Ph: 02-6458-8164.**

# FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

**Dear GR,**

These recipes may be useful to some readers.

For **ECZEMA IN DOGS**, boil four cups of water and eight calendula flowers for five minutes. Allow to cool then strain. Use half a cup twice daily for a week, then once daily.

To **CLEAR MUDDY WATER** use one heaped teaspoon Epsom salts to each bucket of muddy water. Leave stand two days. This water is then suitable for the laundry wash or for floors.

To make **LAUNDRY LIQUID** mix half a cup of dishwashing liquid with quarter of a cup of bicarb soda. Add enough cold water to make one cup. Add one-quarter cup Pine-o-Clean or eucalyptus oil. This amount is enough for two loads.

A good **LEMON LIQUID DEODORANT** is made from 15 grams borax, 45 grams powdered alum (chemist or hardware store), juice of a large lemon, one litre of boiling water. Combine all ingredients with the water, allow to cool then bottle. Use with a wad of cotton wool.

To make a **BLOCK DEODORANT** melt two tablespoons beeswax with two tablespoons olive oil or coconut oil until blended. Remove from heat. Add a few drops of essential oil if desired. Pour into a suitable mould and set.

**Robyn Leah.**

**Dear Grass Roots people,**

Does anyone have any experience and/or knowledge of the use of **NATURAL DYES** to dye fabric or natural dyeing techniques? I would really appreciate any information or hearing of any experiences others may have had.

**Jocelyn Crab,**
**PO Box 302, ENMORE 2042.**

*If there is a handspinners group in your area they may be able to direct you to a book or a shop selling mordants and craft materials. Ask at the library; they generally know about local groups. Have you checked the craft section at the library? 'Spin Your Own Wool And Dye It And Weave It' by Molly Duncan, published by AH and AW Reed has a good chapter on dyeing and discusses gum leaves, and lichen, among other materials, and the use of mordants. Alternatively, contact Judy Bourke, 10 Mt Gilead Rd, Thirroul 2515 enclosing a SAE (DL size) and mention your interest in dyes. She sells nontoxic water-based paints and dyes and also runs workshops on different techniques.*

**Hello GR Family,**

Another year has gone again and once more it went too quickly. I hope the next one will be a little better as I lost two sheep and a beloved Angora goat to dogs. I find it hard to get over this, but life goes on. Rachel the Romney also suffered a ripped eye and half her face and mouth was badly torn, but she has finally recovered (with much extra spoiling), and although her sight is gone in that eye she is fit and happy. I knew sheep were flock animals, but I had no idea how very much they needed company until she delegated me as the other member of her flock. Each morning I had to do the blowing in the nostrils bit; once that was over and I was identified all was well, but I was not allowed to go too far out of her sight. I spent more time outside than I have ever done and in desperation I got another friend for her. His name is Julius, a white Romney-Polworth cross and only young. As Rachel is eight years old, the first thing she did was to bash him up to show him who was boss and from then on it has been all love and head-buttings.

For anyone wanting to lose weight, may I suggest you forget starving, dieting or any form of weight watching. Just get a goanna to haunt your chook house (if you have one) and you'll run off any excess weight. I'm up and down like a flea in a fit trying to grab my eggs before that rotten lizard gets them. My hens are getting a trifle nervous and back up as far as they can go when they see me coming in. It can't be very nice having a hand grope around your knickers when you are trying to lay an egg. I try to be quiet and gentle, but even so it must be a mite unnerving.

My family of maggies had a sudden increase this year: they had four babies instead of the usual two. A friend said that this was because I'd been feeding them too well and have upset the natural balance of things. I am sure she is right so I've eased right off. My kookaburra will not be dissuaded, however; he flies onto the windowsill and bangs heartily until I go out and drop mince into his ever-open beak. He came to me as a baby and he's grown into a lovely bird and is very tame.

**Jackie Pavese,**
**Email: jassy4@austarnet.com.au**

**Dear GR Crew,**

Have just devoured GR 166 (have been a regular reader for many years) and could not help but be motivated to write after reading Suni's comments about **HOME BREWING**. I have been brewing for some 17 years, originally because I could not find a stout made commercially that suited my taste. The first brews were made by mixing all the ingredients individually by the time-honoured methods. But now many varieties are available in kit form and only need minor amounts of additional ingredients to enhance flavours to your own tastes.

Of course, once started on stouts, beers were next. Being fond of Crown Lager and some imported lagers (but too expensive for general consumption), I started enhancing kits with more hops, different sugars (like raw and caster, dextrose and malto dextrin, honey). Finally, a commercial brewer got into the act and suggested methods of producing styles of lagers, ales and stouts based on their kits. Others soon followed suit and there is now a wonderful world of drinks available.

Most of the information on home brewing available in libraries is from English and American publications and describes very involved processes and equipment, however, by chance I found an Australian publication: *The Complete Guide to Home Brewing in Australia* by Laurie Strachan, ISBN 0 7318 0752 9, published by Simon & Schuster (Aust) P/L, 20 Barcoo St, East Roseville, NSW 2069 (now distributed by Gordon & Gotch I believe). The book is also available through Green Harvest Organic Garden Supplies, from whom I have purchased seeds for some years.

The above publication is the very best practical, nontechnical and plain language book I have read on the subject and would meet all the needs of amateur and fastidious home brewers. Other sources are at www.coopers.com.au, www.brewcraft.com.au, www.homebrew.com.au

I'm also into hydroponic gardening as well as organics, have a few chooks and fruit trees, so make jams and pickles. It all helps to keep the head above water on a retirement income. Actually, I work longer now than at my real job, but I can pick and choose what I do and when. So relaxing, no stress.

**Bob Ingle.**

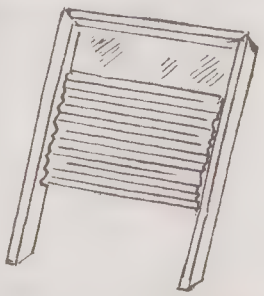
Anonymous letters will not be published. Please indicate if you would like personal details to be withheld.

**Dear GRs,**

**SEEDS**: Jeanie asked about a shilling plant; it sounds to me like honesty (*Lunaria*), which has mauve or white flowers and the seeds are paper-like, round, shiny and white/silver in colour. I have sent her a plant.

**FOOD ALLERGIES**: Fay wants to be a vegetarian but has food allergies. There are websites and many books on food allergies written by Sue Dengate. The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital's Allergy Unit in Sydney publishes a book called *Friendly Food* which is available at bookshops, Kmart, and big newsagencies; it is about $30 RRP, but sometimes available for less.

**WASHBOARDS**: Kristina wants a washboard and hand-wringer. Both turn up in junk shops, especially in country areas, or at garage sales, deceased estates, or country auctions. The scrubbing part of washboards was variously made from wood, patterned glass, or a fine galvanised iron (swimming pool sides might be OK for this). The Alternative Technology Centre near Alice Springs invents all manner of innovative stuff for Aboriginal communities without electricity. One was a hand-operated washing machine using an old round washer with a handle and plunger.



**POISONING OF NATIVE ANIMALS IN TASMANIA**: I understand Sue's concern about this abhorrent practice, but until the Tasmanian people come into the 21st century and tell their state government that this is not acceptable, the practice will continue.

**ORGANIC/PERMACULTURE WORKSHOPS**: Judy asked about these in her area of Victoria. Contact the nearest permaculture group for information. There are permaculture websites, and Permaculture Oceania has a bulletin board, which emanates from the University of NSW Eco Living Centre.

**AGRICULTURE IN EAST AFRICA**: Longino from Tanzania wants help with improving and teaching agriculture. I feel he would be better served by the Permaculture International fraternity and have copied his letter to the Permaculture Oceania bulletin board. Answering any queries from Africa is a bit of a hazard; it is the birthplace of some of the biggest scams the world has seen!

**A-FRAME HOUSES**: Craig asks about A-frame houses. Has he tried his local library or the internet? I am nothing short of amazed at what I can find on the internet. If my own search engine does not turn up much, I then go to Google, and it always comes up with something.

**RECYCLING TIMBER**: Alan's bit about the Murdoch Uni's community garden workshop to make furniture out of recycled material is an excellent signpost to all community gardens and other community organisations, but there is not always anyone with the necessary skills to run these workshops, or funds to establish them, regrettably.

**TICKS** seem to have got us beat. I use Frontline on my dog (and to a lesser extent on my cat), which now has an ingredient for ticks as well as fleas, but some pets are allergic to it.

**QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY** is another insidious pest, which we have not yet beaten. For years I have been making and distributing traps for the female fruit fly, with a label showing the ingredient bait, and recommending Dakpots for trapping the males. I take them to garden club meetings. A local nursery and produce shop that sells the Dakpots generally gives my traps away to anyone who buys a Dakpot. Peter Cundell showed one on 'Gardening Australia'. The Department of Agriculture in NSW can prosecute anyone who has infested fruit on their properties and who is not taking steps to eradicate fruit fly by spraying. Prevention is better than cure.

**Penny Ferguson,**
**BERKELEY 2506.**
**Email: fergiep4@hotmail.com.au**

**Dear Grass Roots Folk,**

I got very worried when I read Jim Berridge's article in GR 165, page 31, on **HOMEMADE DEODORANTS**, where he recommends to put a drop or two of essential oils on the inside of the forearm. This is not recommended by any of the aromatherapists. All essential oils are very concentrated and need to be mixed with a carrier, another oil that forms the bulk of the mixture. Essential oils are added a drop at a time to the oil base. On a delicate area like the skin, scarring could result if the essential oil is put on neat. The only oil to use neat on the skin is lavender and even that needs to be diluted with other oils for sensitive people. I also had some misgivings about the 'Hints for **HEALTHY HAIR**', GR 165, page 21. Hair is just as fragile as skin, and more so when wet. Some of the ingredients, such as lemon, would be too strong for the skin on the scalp; because it is protected by hair, it is not tough. I think that the hair changing colour is due to some of the raw products used on it which have stripped out the oils. The brushing will bring it back to good health, however. Roger French, editor of *New Vegetarian Natural Health* magazine, advertised in GR 136, page 77, has advised that **WATER ALONE** is all that is necessary for cleaning the hair and warm, not hot, water is best. Brushing also cleans the hair and if the diet is a healthy one the hair should be okay. My grandmother washed her hair in Sunlight laundry soap all her life and it was so long and healthy she could sit on it! When Dove soap came on the market, the variety for sensitive skin, it was advertised as okay for washing the hair. I have never used shampoos or conditioners, but I occasionally warm a teaspoon of olive oil and massage it onto the scalp if I have been ill and my hair looks dry.

Some replies to GR 165 Feedback inquiries: M Campbell – orris root is the name of the powdered form of Florentine iris. Julie from Lilydale – look up instructions for making paper beads in a craft book. These strips of paper, wound around a knitting needle with glue and paint, are surprisingly strong. Karen Dorlandt – my stevia plant, bought from Isabell Shipard in Nambour, grows well in a sunny spot. There is a warning from Peter D'Adamo and Catherine Whitney in *Eat Right For Your Type – Complete Blood Type Encyclopedia* that people with blood type O should not eat stevia. This manual often can be found in the reference section of your local library. Could Bob Rankin of Port Macquarie, GR 165, page 28, say why the caustic soda mix has to be left to cool when cold water is used? Is it a compound that heats the water up? I'd like to hear from anyone who has been cured of food or chemical allergies without sensitisation injections. There are indications that food avoidance makes the body more sensitive.

I have GRs 154, 149, 146, 142, 128 to trade for copies of GRs 166, 150, 139, 138, 103, 95, 94, 68, 38 or 22, on a one-for-one basis, post paid.

I will pay costs for anyone willing to send me a couple of ice cream beans and a carob pod.

**H Bell,**
**4 Yawang St, BERKELEY 2506.**

To avoid unwelcome approaches writers may indicate any personal details they wish to be withheld. Don't forget to put preferred contact details at the *bottom* of your letter. Letters are accepted and edited at the discretion of the publishers.

# FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

**Dear GRs,**

I wrote five years ago for help for my then not-quite-one-year-old grandson, who had been born 13 weeks early and suffered from **BELL'S PALSY** and other problems, and the help and advice I was given was enormous. This little man will be starting primary school in the new year. He still has a speech problem and needs to wear glasses and has slight cerebral palsy, which means his balance is not quite right, but he reads everything in sight and started at under two years old by asking what a word was in the local shop catalogues and signs on the way to his different doctors. He has spent the last year in a special class at a school 25 kilometres from home and was happy to go on the small bus and to come home by taxi all by himself. We are so thankful that so many people have been so good to this special boy and taken the time to try and understand him. His older brother is marvellous with him and their dad has been great. My daughter and I have helped my son, but he has done most of it on his own.

I find the magazine so helpful for so much. We live by the sea in a rented house with not much area for vegie growing, but my son grows a lot in his garden. My health has gone down over the years, but we all manage. I don't know where I would be without my daughter and her daughter; we live together and have done for seven years. At first my mum was living with us too, but she passed away five years ago.

If anyone would like to write, please do. I am not looking for a relationship, just some friends. I am 65 and I like reading, sewing and folk art.

**Audrey McCurdy,**
**125 Diamond Head Dr, SANDY BEACH 2456.**

**Dear Readers,**

I've got something that might help others who can't get off to sleep, or who wake early and can't doze off again. A friend sent me a catalogue from 'Sleepless No More', a mail order company specialising in **NATURAL PRODUCTS FOR INSOMNIACS**. It's great because all the natural alternatives are in the one catalogue and you can browse and compare. There are even relaxation CDs. I'm just trying my first order, some relaxing essential oils and tissue salts, but it's too early to say I'm cured. Here's hoping.

Contact: Sleepless No More, 1358 Triamble Rd, Hargraves 2850, freecall/freefax: 1800-444-064, email: zzz@sleeplessnomore.com, www.sleeplessnomore.com

**Diane French,**
**BRUNSWICK EAST 3057.**

**Dear Grass Roots Readers,**

My husband and I recently (November 2004) spent two weeks in Tasmania and we found all the locals very friendly and helpful. In fact, we loved everything about the island; the mountains, the rivers, the beautiful scenery, the cool climate and frequent falls of rain. We would love to live there in the years to come.

June Marsh's letter in GR 166 made me think of an old verse:

I went outside to find a friend,
But could not find one there,
I went outside to be a friend,
And friends were everywhere.

**Lyn & Rob Sheppard,**
**'Wallaroo', TENTERFIELD 2372.**

**Hi There,**

Wondering if someone can help me with some information. I came across a lengthy article on **SOY BEANS** claiming that soy is really not that good for you and I want to know if somebody can clarify the truth or otherwise of these claims. I was eating tofu up until I read this article.

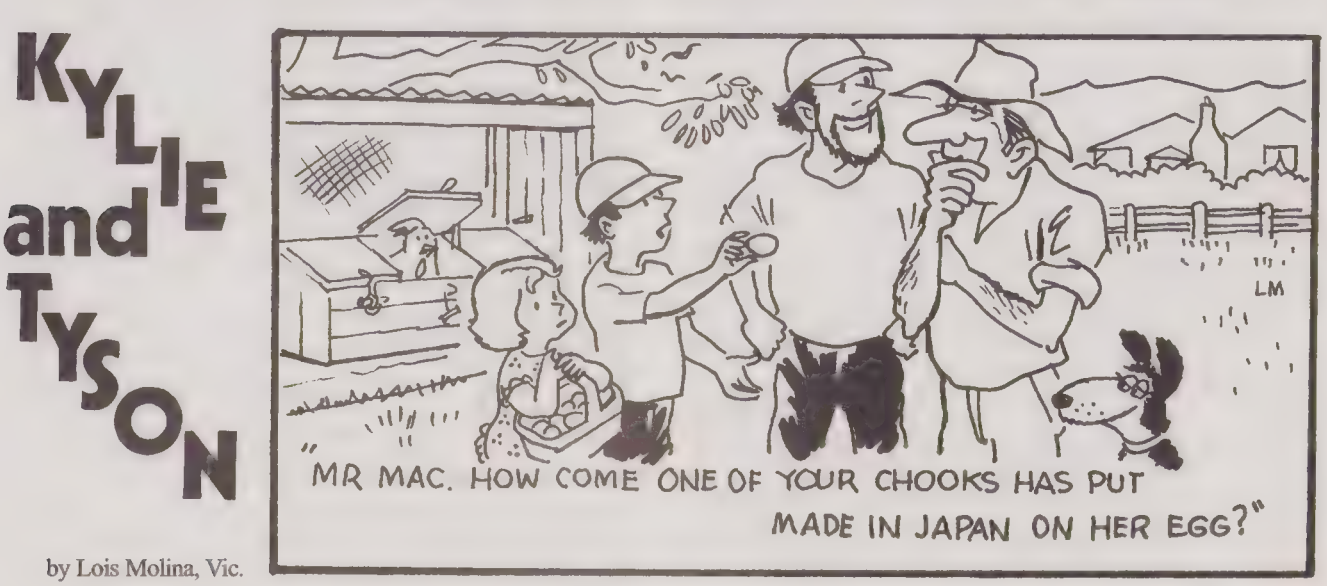
Any feedback would be welcomed.

**Sandra Joran,**
**PO Box 182, NIMBIN 2480.**

**Dear Grass Roots Readers,**

I am a 36-year-old male living west of Brisbane on an acre in a three-bedroom house. I try hard to live a GR lifestyle (but I am a bit lazy, which really doesn't go with the lifestyle). I wonder if folk have **SEEDS OF ANY DESCRIPTION** to send to me as I am trying to plant out most of the block with plants, food bearing and native, to create a private sanctuary for myself and a future lifestyle partner. I enjoy writing and artistic endeavours, am basically a bohemian, but love wild gardens and privacy. If you could help please do; I would greatly appreciate this.

**Patric Kai,**
**1 Caleys Crt, LOCKROSE 4342.**
**Email: patkai@hotmail.com**




by Lois Molina, Vic.

# Locate Levels With Homemade Tools

by Mick Schultz, Drake, NSW.

If you're trying to be as self-reliant as possible, sooner or later you're going to want to find levels. Levels are required when building and when marking out contours for swales, mulch traps, paths and absorption trenches. If you can't borrow or afford to buy a dumpy level, the two simple, practical tools described below are easy and inexpensive to make and use. They are also relatively accurate over short distances.

## A-FRAME LEVEL

The advantages of the A-frame level are that there is no setting up so it is quick to use, a single person can operate it, and it can be used to measure distances. Its disadvantage is that it can't measure heights.

### Materials Required

- 2 of 1400 x 35 x 20 mm (approx) lengths timber
- 1 of 600 x 75 x 20 mm (approx) piece timber
- 2 of 135 x 30 mm builders' metal strap (hoop iron)
- spirit level
- nails
- insulation tape

### To Make

Lay the two long pieces of timber on a flat surface with one on top of the other at the apex. Spread the legs apart until a distance of 1050 millimetres from the outer bottom corners is reached.

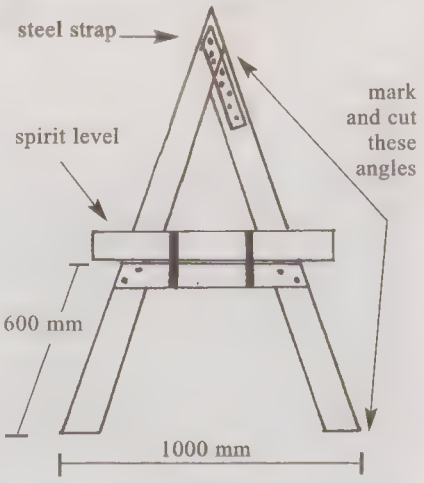
Mark the angle at the apex on the bottom leg where the top leg crosses it. Cut this corner off and join the two pieces together with the metal strap and nails to form a neat apex.

Measure across the outer edge of the frame near the bottom and find where it is a metre wide. This should be the same distance down from the tip of the apex on both sides. Using a straight edge, join these two points and mark a line across the timber.

Cut the ends off so the legs will sit flat when standing upright, then measure up from the bottom 650 millimetres on both legs. Secure the top edge of the cross-brace on these marks with nails. You might have to drill holes smaller than the nails to prevent the timber from splitting.

Check to make sure the legs are still a metre apart before fastening the cross-brace to the second leg. Attach the spirit level to the top edge of the cross-brace using insulation tape and your tool is ready for use.

A-Frame Level




### To Use

**Horizontal Levels**: Place one leg on the point (datum) where you want the contour line to start. Swivel the other leg around in the direction you want to head until the bubble in the level indicates you have found the same height. Mark this point with a peg or ag-lime, then swivel the frame around another time until you've found the same height again. Continue the process until the end of your contour has been reached. Join the marks with a string-line, garden hose or ag-lime to form a contour line.

**Calculating Distance**: This is also a handy tool to measure between objects, and to plot positions of elements if you want to do a site plan close to scale for a permaculture design. To calculate the distance, just count how many times you swivelled the frame and this will indicate approximately how many metres between the two points.

## WATER LEVEL

The advantage of a water level is that it can measure differences in height and determine a datum point to take measurements from for building. Its disadvantages are that it requires two people to operate and that you may get incorrect readings caused by bubbles, blocks or kinks if you are not careful.

### Materials Required

- 6 m x 8 mm length of clear plastic hose (can be longer or shorter)
- 2 of 1200 mm lengths bamboo (staffs)
- 6 plastic cable ties

### To Make

Cut a groove around each length of bamboo with a hacksaw 900 millimetres from the bottom end. This is a good height for viewing the water line – the lower you go, the harder it is to read, much higher and you run the risk of losing water as you move around.

Now cut another 10 lines at one-centimetre intervals around the bamboo on both sides of the 900-millimetre mark on both staffs.

With a permanent marker, write the numbers 0 to 10 on both sides of the 900-millimetre mark, with '0' indicating the 900-millimetre mark. Leave approximately 75 millimetres of hose above the staff to kink and tuck into the hollow bamboo end. This will prevent water spilling when the device is moved.

Attach the plastic hose beside the numbers with the cable ties above and below the calibrations and approximately 10 centimetres from the bottom of the staff.

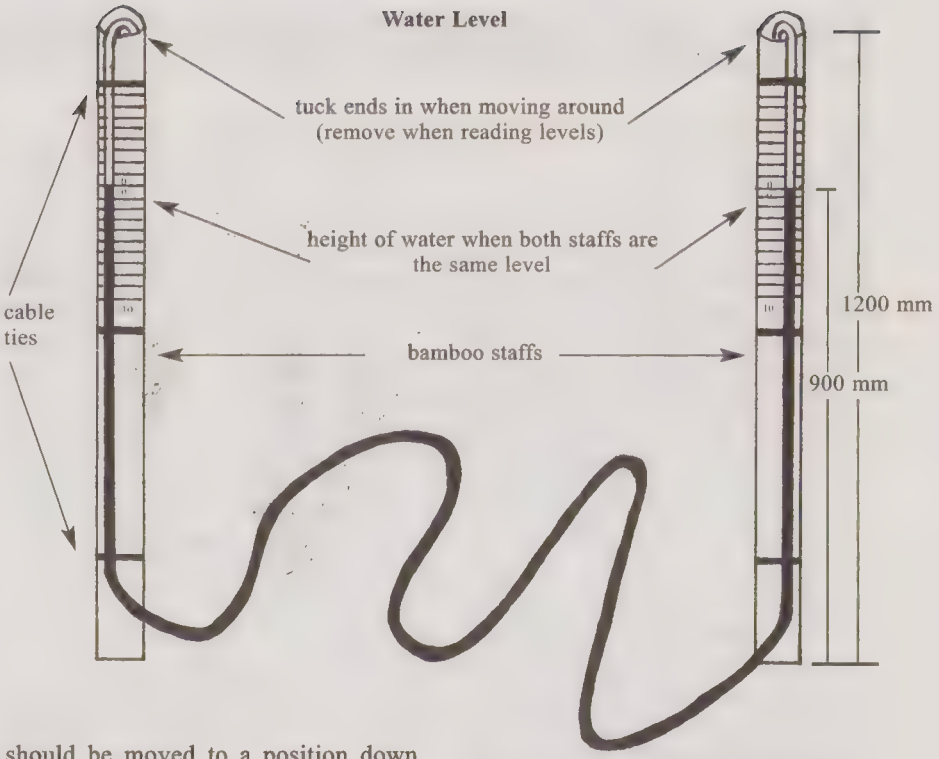
### To Calibrate

Calibrate the level by slowly and carefully adding water until the water line is on the '0' (900-millimetre) mark on

each staff. This can be achieved easily without bubbles by syphoning water through, then draining a bit out. A large clean syringe is handy for topping up small quantities of water, but not necessary. Note that the staffs must be on the same level or height, otherwise one water mark will read high while the other reads low.

Remember to untuck hose ends to allow water to stabilise quickly when taking readings. Your water level is now ready to use. Be careful not to lift one end too much higher than the other as you could lose some of the water and have to recalibrate (or allow for the loss).

**Note**: Don't be tempted to colour the water; this could stain the plastic tube and make it harder to read in the future. Always remember to drain the hose when not in use, for the same reason.




### To Use

**Horizontal Levels**: When marking out a contour, hold one staff where you want to begin (datum point), while someone else moves with the other staff across the contour. How far they move is limited by the length of the hose and determined by the undulations of the land. If the site is flat, the points can be further apart, for example six metres, but if the natural terrain is steep or has hills or valleys, points may need to be plotted at one-metre intervals.

To find the same level as the datum point, the water line on both staffs will be on the '0' mark. If, for instance, the water line is on the five-centimetre mark above the '0' mark at the datum point, this would indicate that the other end is five centimetres too high, and should be moved to a position down slope where the water line aligns with the '0' mark. On the other hand, if the water line is on the five-centimetre mark below the '0' mark at the datum point, this would indicate that the other end is five centimetres too low and will need to be moved up slope.

When the same height is determined, this point is marked with a peg or a dusting of ag-lime. Continue this process to the point where you want the contour line to finish by moving the datum staff to the last point that was marked. Join all the marks with a stringline, hose or ag-lime to complete your contour line.

**Heights**: Use your water level to work out equal heights when building. For example: say you had some poles standing up on uneven ground ready to start your frame for a shed; you would need equal datum marks on each pole so you could take measurements above and below these points for your framework to be level. To do this, hold one staff against the pole on the highest ground while someone else takes the other staff to another pole. Now move that staff up or down the pole until the water line is on the '0' position on both staffs. Mark these points on both poles.

The rest of the poles are marked the same way, using your previous marks as your reference for the next datum point.

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# Easy DIY Pond

by Bette Shiels, Bundaberg, Qld.

No doubt, being environmentalists and keen gardeners, most *Grass Roots* readers have watched with interest the television programs that show how easy it is to transform a neglected garden into a landscaped masterpiece. All it takes is two days of backbreaking work for five adults, and a money tree.

Seems to me that practicality and common sense don't enter into the process. For people living on a tight budget, $3000 to landscape might just as well be $30,000. There are easier and cheaper ways of beautifying a property without the expense and with a minimum of hard labour by utilising everyday household objects and left-over or scrounged materials, and by economising on plants.

A perfect example is the way I constructed my fishpond using material available. With most house constructions there is a large amount of excess building material discarded. Our building was no different, so I decided to put it to good use.

Shortly after we bought our wooded block, a gigantic dead gum tree fell across the back section. Its pale grey trunk formed a skeletal sculpture that made a wonderful climbing structure for my many grandchildren. It was too expensive to have removed or cut up, so I decided to build a fishpond under one of its outstretched arms.

I waited until after a heavy rain, then conned my grandchildren into helping me dig the hole on the promise of a treat: seeing the latest movie. Of course, the digging was done over a period of time and was a wonderful way of redirecting misspent teenage energy. It's amazing how docile a rumbustious 16-year-old boy becomes after digging dirt for a couple of hours. Many guests and friends helped out as well after the offer of a pool party on completion.

Two grandchildren took great delight in decorating the tree trunk with paintings of native animals, and I planted some native orchids in a few of the trunk's hollows and hung the moss commonly known as 'old man's whiskers' above the pool opening.

When we finally had a hole around knee deep, we used heavy construction-strength plastic sheeting, left over from beneath the house slab, to line the hole. We had trouble moulding the sheeting to the shape, so began running water into it before we anchored the sides with flat bluestones my husband had acquired from a gravel pit for the price of a slab of beer. The hardest part was picking over the mountain of rock to find the flattest stones. When the pool was three-quarters full, we made small cuts in the top to enable us to fold the plastic over neatly beneath the bluestones.

By using plastic sheeting instead of cement, there was no need to wait for cement to cure before transferring our goldfish from the small indoor pool.

Once the pool was complete, I used more of the bluestones for stepping-stones around it and planted cuttings of sun jewels as a ground cover.

A trip to the local weir gained us a few water plants and the root of a water lily that we planted in a plastic pot and weighed down with a stone. A wild umbrella plant was also potted and placed in the water to give the fish some shade. We covered the bottom of the pool with gravel left over from our building. A few months later we were ready for our pool party.

Total cost: a few blisters, a slab of beer, a trip to the gravel pit and weir and a pleasant day at the movies for three grandchildren.

# Water From Air

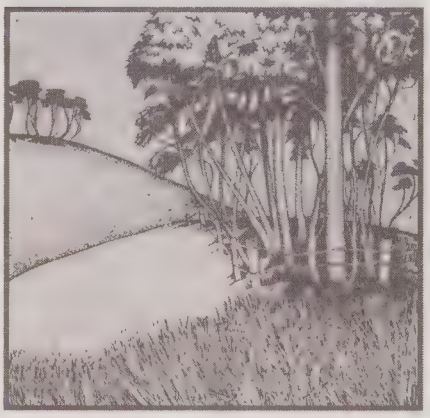
by John Mount, Mount Mee, Qld.

Each person must drink a certain amount of water every day to stay healthy and remain alive. If rain or groundwater is not readily available, there is another little-known alternative source from which we can draw water; the air. Few people realise that we live in a veritable ocean of moisture, from which, with a little effort, we can draw fresh water to supplement other sources.

Apart from the obvious method of cloud-seeding, there are several techniques of persuading the atmospheric ocean to release some of its vast supply of moisture. Three of the best known are air wells, dew ponds, and fog fences. These three systems of water catchment have been known for hundreds of years and could be adapted for use today in many situations.

## AIR WELLS

The collection of atmospheric humidity is an ancient technology that has been largely ignored in modern times. One of the most impressive examples of this science was discovered in 1900–03 during the excavation of Theodosia (a Byzantine city dating to around 500 BC). Archaeologists found a system of numerous pipes, about 75 millimetres in diameter, leading to, and once supplying, wells and fountains in the city. The pipes were traced back to a nearby hill, and were found to originate from 13 structures made of



limestone blocks, each pile about 12 metres tall and 30 metres square. This system of air wells, using the well-known process of water-condensation, was calculated to have produced about 64,000 litres of water daily.

## FOG FENCES

Another unusual system of water catchment is the fog fence or fog trap. Chilean researchers have developed a fog trap at Chungungo, Chile. There, a group of 50 fog traps made of plastic mesh stand atop a nearby 800-metre mountain and collect up to 9000 litres daily. The villagers call it 'harvesting the clouds'. As the fog, heavily-laden with moisture, comes into contact with the mesh, thousands of tiny water droplets are condensed and deposited on the mesh, eventually running downwards into containers where water is collected.

## DEW PONDS

In neolithic times certain groups of humans, living in areas where water was often in short supply or difficult to obtain, resorted to constructing dew ponds. As the name suggests, these dew ponds, when properly constructed, would extract large quantities of water from the air, thus allowing a small community to survive on a supply of air-extracted moisture.

Dew ponds were usually constructed in a well-chosen depression in the ground. The author Arthur J Hubbard describes a dew pond in his book *Neolithic Dew Ponds and Cattleways* (1907). Apparently, a team of workers travelled the countryside constructing dew ponds on farms for water catchment in dry soil.

The earth was hollowed out in an area from about 9 to 21 metres diameter, the summit of a down being a preferred location. The area was covered thickly with dry straw and the straw covered with finely puddled clay, care being taken that the margin of the straw was well protected by the clay. Finally, the clay was well covered with stones. The pond filled with water by the natural processes of evaporation and condensation; the larger the pond, the more quickly it filled. Though called 'dew ponds', it is speculated that their moisture derived more from fogs, mists and rain than from dew.


**THE OGDEN BORE PUMP.**

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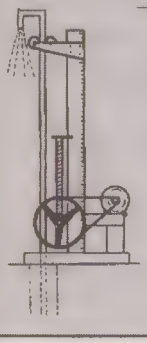

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**National Permaculture Convergence, Melbourne, April 2005.**

# KIDS PAGE
## BOOKS

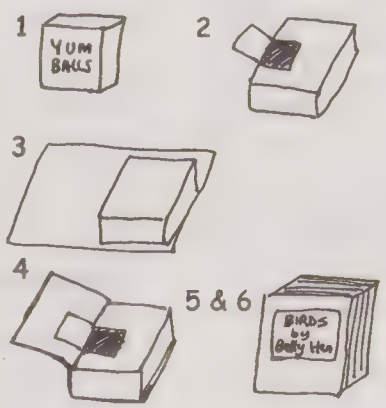
Books – portable written or printed works – enable us all to learn and share information and ideas. The earliest books were in the form of clay tablets and were made in Syria 5000 years ago. Animal skins and papyrus scrolls were other early forms of books. It wasn't until the 7th century that books began to be printed in multiple copies using wood blocks and in the 15th century mass printings using metal moulds began.

There are many kinds of books: biographies, histories, how-tos, cooking, journals, fiction, fairy tales, comics. Read the books of others, or make your own to share your ideas with friends. Local libraries are a great place to access a large range of books. This page shows you two unusual books to make yourself.

## Secret Book

This is a false book to hide treasures in and keep in your bookshelf.

**You will need:**
empty cereal box
white paper
coloured heavy weight paper
glue & tape
scissors




1. Tape down the opened end of box.
2. Cut a flap for the secret trapdoor on the front left side of the box.
3. Make the book's cover by tracing the box shape on the heavy weight coloured paper. Flip the box over and over again to include area for the spine and back and front covers.
4. Cut cover and glue the spine, back cover and trap door onto the heavy coloured paper.
5. Cut pieces of white paper to fit onto the edges of the book. Draw lines on these to represent pages.
6. Make up a title and author and decorate the front cover and spine so the book looks real.

## Jokes

What do you do if a dragon bites on your favourite book?
*Take the words right out of its mouth.*

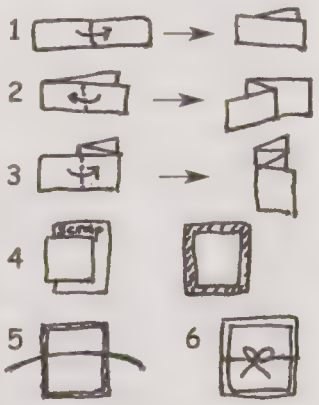
Why didn't the burglar break into the library?
*He was afraid of getting a long sentence.*

Why did the librarian slip and fall on the library floor?
*Because she was in the nonfriction section.*

## Accordion Book

This form of book is a great way to view the contents all at once.

**You will need:**
piece of long paper
2 pieces of cardboard for covers
1 piece of ribbon
glue
scrap paper




1. Fold the piece of long paper in half.
2. Fold the top page in half by folding it back to meet the fold.
3. Turn the paper over and fold the top half by bringing it back to meet the fold (you have an accordion).
4. Open the first page of the accordion and put a piece of scrap paper inside. Cover the surface of the first page with glue then lift up and place in to centre of one of the cover pieces.
5. Put scrap paper under what is the top page now and cover it with glue. Lay the ribbon across this page and then place the second cover on top.
6. Allow glue to dry then write and illustrate your accordion book as you wish. Display as an accordion or store with the ribbon tied in a bow.

## REVIEW
### Make Your Own Book A Complete Kit

This package has everything needed to put together a book easily – covers, 32 pages, needle and thread, paste, brush, paraffin wax. It includes a handbook explaining how to make up the kit book and provides lots of other good information about books and publishing written for kids to understand (upper primary). A great gift for children no matter what their interests as they can write and illustrate the kit book however they want.

**Running Press, distributed by Bookwise International, PO Box 2164, Regency Park 5942. RRP: $39.95.**

# IN THE KITCHEN

**It's hot. Let's face it, you don't want to be sitting eating in a stuffy kitchen, so here are some quick meals, using ripe tomatoes and zucchinis and other goodies from your garden, which are perfect for eating on the verandah while waiting for a cool breeze.**

### TOMATO AND HERB FOCCACIA

50 g sundried tomatoes in oil
200 ml boiling water
450 g flour
½ tsp salt
50 g butter
7 g sachet dried yeast
1 tbsp chopped fresh thyme
3 tbsp olive oil
1 egg

Put tomatoes in a bowl and pour over hot water. Leave to soak 15 minutes. Put flour and salt in a second bowl and rub in butter. Stir in yeast. Drain tomatoes, reserving liquid, and stir into flour with herbs. Beat together reserved liquid, olive oil and egg. Make a well in flour mixture, pour in egg and mix to a dough. Turn dough onto a floured surface and knead for 5 minutes or until smooth. Put dough on a greased baking sheet and press into a square about 25 cm across. Cover with a tea towel and leave in a warm place for 30 minutes or until doubled in size. Brush with salt water and slash top with a knife.

Bake in oven at 220° C for 15 – 20 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle with chopped rosemary and thyme before serving.

Can be used as the basis of a ploughman's style supper, with olives, dips, cheese, salami, salad etc. Tastes great for lunch next day with grilled cheese too.

### STUFFED TOMATOES

½ cup vegie stock
½ cup couscous
3 tbsp fresh mint
3 tbsp parsley
¼ cup pistachios or nut of choice, chopped
100 g fetta, chopped
3 tbsp olive oil
salt and pepper
4 large ripe tomatoes

Preheat oven to 180° C. Pour stock

into saucepan and bring to boil. Place couscous in bowl and pour hot stock over. Cover and leave for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork then mix in mint, parsley, nuts, fetta and olive oil.

Slice the top off each tomato and reserve. Use a teaspoon to hollow out and remove and discard seeds. Fill each tomato with couscous mixture and replace lids. Place on a baking tray and cook for 15 – 20 minutes. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

### SOYARONI CHEESE WITH VEGIES

200 g soyaroni pasta
50 g butter
2 tbsp plain milk
1 tbsp grainy mustard
2 zucchinis, diced
1 red capsicum, seeded, diced
3 tomatoes, chopped
½ cup grated cheese
¼ cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped
½ cup Parmesan

Cook pasta according to packet directions and drain well. Melt butter in saucepan, add flour and form a paste. Stir constantly over low heat for 1 minute. Remove from heat and whisk in milk. Return to heat and cook 5 minutes, stirring, until it thickens. Add mustard and vegetables. Simmer 3 – 4 minutes. Stir in pasta, cheddar and parsley, warm, sprinkle with Parmesan and serve. Serves 4.

### ZUCCHINI AND LAMB FILLETS

8 lamb fillets
3 tbsp olive oil
4 zucchinis, sliced diagonally
1 punnet cherry tomatoes
½ cup flaked almonds, chopped
2 tbsp Parmesan, grated
1½ tbsp lemon juice
½ cup olive oil
¼ cup mint, chopped

Preheat oven to 220° C. Heat a grill pan, rub lamb fillets with 1 tbsp of olive oil, and sear till golden brown. Transfer to oven-proof dish and cook for another 3 or 4 minutes for medium rare, then set aside. Place zucchini and tomatoes in a bowl, add remaining oil, salt and pepper and toss. Cook vegies in a frypan over high heat until browned, then set aside.

Combine remaining ingredients and season to taste. Slice lamb on diagonal, divide zucchini mix evenly, top with lamb and spoon over almond mix. Serves 4.

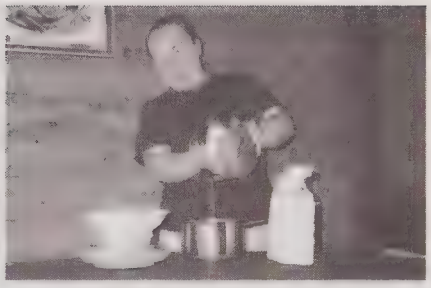
### STRAWBERRY AND YOGHURT PARFAITS

2 punnets strawberries, quartered
¼ cup brown sugar
4 tsp white sugar
1 cup yoghurt
¼ cup sour cream
¼ tsp grated orange rind
mint for garnish

In a medium bowl, combine strawberries and brown and white sugars. Mix well, then stand until sugars dissolve and berries release their juices, about 20 minutes. Stir a few times.

In a small bowl, combine yoghurt, sour cream and orange rind.

Spoon one-third of berry mix into 4 long glasses, preferably parfait glasses. Top each with 2 tbsp of yoghurt mixture. Repeat another layer of berry then yoghurt. Final layer should be berries, a dollop of of yoghurt mix and some mint sprigs. Serves 4.



# Candied Fruit Made Easy

by Anita Morton, Uki, NSW.

Everyone who grows their own fruit will be familiar with the main problem: when a crop ripens, it all ripens at once. There's no way even the greediest family can eat a whole tree full of apricots or plums in a week, so we humans have invented many cunning ways of preserving the glut for later consumption. Drying, bottling or making jam are all easy methods that result in useful preserved food. But what about trying something a bit different; a method that produces a luxurious food from cheap ingredients and a few minutes' work a day?

Candied, crystallised and glacé fruits are so delectable that few people can resist them. Because they are expensive to buy, these fruits are a luxury item in most households, reserved for Christmas or special occasions. Candied fruits also make brilliant presents, dinner-party nibbles, children's sweets or trade goods. We once traded two kilos of crystallised fruit for 30 bottles of very decent red wine!

## INGREDIENTS

The basic ingredients are fruit, white sugar, water and glucose syrup. The fruit is preserved by replacing part of its natural water content with sugar. Glucose is added to prevent the sugar from recrystallising over time. This method works best with fruits that are fairly firm, well flavoured and have some acidity, such as apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, pineapple or plums. The fruit must be ripe but still firm. Very soft fruits such as berries will probably fall apart, so they are not suitable for preserving in this way.

Some fruits tend to lose or change colour when candied. If you want bright red glacé cherries, for example, you will have to start with a white-fleshed, pale-skinned fruit, and then make up your syrup with food colouring to dye it. Alternatively, if you're dissatisfied with the final colour of your fruits, roll them in sugar for a crystallised finish and no one will ever know.

## METHOD

There are several methods of making candied fruit, but this is the one I've had best results with. The procedure for crystallised, candied and glacé fruit is identical up to the finishing stages, so you can preserve the fruit first, and then decide on how you want to present it.

### Day One

First, prepare the fruit. Wash well, cut stone fruit in half and remove the stones, peel pineapple and cut it into chunks. Peel peaches if you want, but it really isn't necessary. Cherries will need to have their stones removed – an easy job with one of the handy gadgets sold for the purpose.

If you want to preserve whole fruit such as cherry plums or crab apples, wash and then stab each fruit all over with a skewer, right down to the core. The sugar syrup can't penetrate fruit skin, so you have to provide pathways for it to percolate into the flesh. It's a good idea to crack some of the pits from stone fruit and add a few of the kernels to the syrup; this gives an interesting bitter-almond flavour to the finished product.

Now weigh your prepared fruit and make a note of the weight. It can be a bit difficult to remember what you should be doing and when. As soon as you've weighed the fruit, make a list of days one through to fourteen and work out how much sugar has to be added and when. Pin it up somewhere or stick it to the fridge. Cross off each day's processing as you do it and you won't run into any difficulties.

Put the fruit in a saucepan and pour in enough boiling water to just barely cover. Simmer gently until the fruit is tender. It will take about two minutes for things like pineapple, up to ten minutes for large pieces of firm fruit. When the fruit is tender and before it turns mushy, drain off the cooking water into a jug.

For every kilo you started with (and you did write it down, didn't you?), you will need to make up syrup from 600 millilitres of the water you poached the fruit in, plus 110 grams of sugar and 260 grams of glucose syrup. Put the water, sugar and glucose into the saucepan and heat it, stirring occasionally, until the sugar has dissolved and the syrup has boiled. Meantime, put the cooked fruit into a heatproof bowl and find a plate that fits inside the bowl.

When the syrup is boiling, pour it over the fruit. Weigh the fruit down with the plate so that it is completely submerged. Cover the bowl and put it somewhere out of the way. That's it for today.

### Day Two

On day two, drain the syrup off into a saucepan and add 100 grams of sugar for every kilo of fruit you started with. Heat it until the sugar dissolves, bring to the boil and then pour the syrup back onto the fruit.

### Days Three to Seven

Do exactly the same thing for the next five days, pouring off the syrup, adding 110 grams of sugar, boiling it and pouring back onto the fruit.

### Day Eight

On day eight the procedure changes. This time, when you drain the syrup, you will need to add 170 grams of sugar per kilo of fruit. Heat it, stirring until the sugar is dissolved, and bring to the boil. Now add the fruit and simmer it all together for three or four minutes; this helps to plump up the fruit. Then put it all back in the bowl, put the plate back on top and leave it for 48 hours.

### Day Ten

Two days later (day ten) tip off the syrup and add another 170 grams of sugar. Heat and dissolve as before, then add the fruit. Simmer for three minutes then put it all back in the bowl and leave it for four days. By this stage the syrup should be the consistency of honey. If for some reason it isn't, just repeat the process one more time.

### Day Fourteen

The fruit is now preserved. Kept in its syrup it will last for at least a year. This is a good way of keeping ginger, for example. However, most fruits will need further processing. Crystallised fruit is dried and then rolled in caster sugar, glacé fruit is dipped in a strong sugar glaze and candied fruit is just dried.

## FURTHER PROCESSING

### Candied And Crystallised Fruit

Take the fruit out of the syrup and let it drain on a rack. Either put it out in the sun for a day or two, or dry the fruit in a very low oven with the door propped open. Take care if you choose the latter option; the high sugar content can easily caramelise if the fruit gets too hot. When the fruit is no longer sticky, you can pack it away in airtight containers with greaseproof paper between the layers (candied fruit), or proceed to turn it into crystallised fruit.

To do this, take the dried candied fruit and use a fork to dip each piece individually into boiling water for a second. Drain it briefly and then roll the fruit pieces in caster sugar. Store as for candied fruit.

### Glacé Fruit

The glacé finish is a bit more complicated, but makes the fruit pieces smooth, shiny and succulent looking. Start with fruit straight out of the syrup, rather than dried. Make new syrup with 450 grams of sugar and 150 millilitres of water, bring it to the boil and then keep it hot and covered. Have another saucepan standing by filled with boiling water. Take each piece of fruit on a dipping fork and dip it into the boiling water for 20 seconds. Meanwhile, decant about half a cup of hot syrup into a small bowl or cup. Take the fruit out of the boiling water and quickly dip it into the hot syrup. Place each piece on a rack to drain. The syrup in the cup will become a bit cloudy as you work – when this happens, throw it away and replace with fresh hot syrup from the saucepan. When you've finished the whole batch, dry and store it as for crystallised and candied fruit.

### Leftover Syrup

'But what should I do with all this leftover syrup?' I hear you ask. Well, it's a perfect substitute for honey in cooked desserts or makes an unusual topping for fruit salad or cereal. It also makes a great base for soft drinks. Mix citric acid to taste into the syrup and heat until it dissolves, then bottle while hot. Add one tablespoon of syrup to a glass of plain cold water or soda water – too easy! The syrup from candying citrus peels (see below) should be kept for the adults' drinks; a little slurp in the G&T makes all the difference!

### Glacé Ginger

If you would like to make glacé ginger or candied citrus peel, there are a few extra pointers to add to the basic method.

With ginger, I find it best to keep the finished product stored in its syrup. This way the ginger stays juicy. Always preserve young ginger, which you can buy or harvest in May. This has fewer fibres and is more tender. Scrape off the skin and cut the roots up into bite-sized pieces. Ginger needs long boiling to be tender, so be patient and cook it until it's soft. If you want the finished product to be milder, discard the cooking liquid and make your syrup with plain water. Now use the standard method.

### Candied Peel

Candied peel is really useful for cooking and is also a delicious after-dinner nibble. Use the peel of lemons, oranges or grapefruit and try to select skins that have a thick pith or white layer, as they will be more succulent when preserved. Wash the fruits, cut them in half and squeeze out the juice to use for other purposes. Use a spoon to scrape all the flesh out of the skins. You can either leave them in large pieces or cut them up into segments or strips. Put the peel in a saucepan and cover with boiling water. Simmer for about one hour, until tender.

If you don't like too much bitterness, it's a good idea to change the cooking water once or twice. Always replace the drained-off water with fresh boiling water. Once the peel is tender, start the candying process from day one.

Once you've finished candying the peel and it is dry, try cutting it into strips and dipping in melted dark chocolate. Put the pieces on silicone baking paper until the chocolate sets, and store them (if you can) in a cool place. Yummy!

## USING

Apart from storing your preserved fruit for eating as-is or adding it to your cooking, you will also find it incredibly useful in other ways. When visiting friends or going out for dinner, a small box of candied fruit is a perfect present. It can be packed up in a cardboard box with some tissue paper and wrapped around with a ribbon for a decorative gift. Please remember to tell the recipient that the fruit should be stored in an airtight container if it's not all eaten straight away. Sugar is hygroscopic (absorbs water) and if the fruit is allowed to get too damp, the preservation will fail and it will go mouldy.

As you can see, candying fruit really is a very simple process. It relies on the principle of slowly and steadily increasing the sugar content of the fruit and for that reason it can't be hurried. However, it requires only a few minutes every day and there is no special skill or equipment involved – so why not give it a go this year? Turn some of that gorgeous fresh fruit, which otherwise might go to waste, into a special treat and enjoy the gasps and admiration of everyone who didn't read this article!

# Tagasaste Renewal

by Charlie Schroeder, Cassilis, Vic.

Another drought and bushfire season has passed, but I know there is more of the same waiting in the wings. The previous drought occurred only four years ago; it too was called the 'worst drought in living memory', it too cost many people dearly. This recent one was quick in coming and yet it brought with it a different severity not found in the previous dry event. Each drought is different and requires different strategies, both physical and mental, to deal with it. I see this kind of event as nature resting and replenishing, all of which is part of the whole.

We cut tagasaste throughout the dry winter, into the even drier spring and summer. Despite the fires around us, sheep still had to be fed, and this continued long after the fires moved away from us directly. Relentless, the drought persisted into the autumn. Tagasaste trees that had had their branches cut with loppers were now chainsawed to the ground, and their continued existence was threatened; many did not survive this treatment. Debris lay over 600 millimetres deep along some hedgerows; branches and even whole trees were without any foliage because all bark had been stripped from the wood by hungry sheep.

One characteristic of this drought had been the lack of an occasional dew during the nights or mornings that would have allowed the trees to harvest water on their hairy leaves. Because of this absence, the foliage was not as juicy and fresh, yet it seemed that it was no less palatable. The sheep ate anything that was cut for them. We turned the electric fences off and they were allowed in the hedgerows, almost certainly ensuring that none of the old trees would coppice as all the bark was stripped from the stumps. They were too old. But three droughts ago, the same trees cut in this way recovered and grew vigorously. Those old trees served us well for 10 or more years, supplementing the very scarce fodder in this rain shadow area; now many hedgerows are gone. Because the fire spared us, we did not get to see what the trees could withstand under bushfire conditions and how they might have come back.

Once the fires had gone and restrictions were lifted, we started the big clean-up, heaping up and burning the dead tagasaste branches. Our energetic cleaning of this debris, now no longer of value to the sheep, was both therapeutic and productive, but had to be halted after a shower of rain. It only just wet the ground but was heavy enough to cause considerable damage. Then we noticed that growing beneath the protective covering of the branches and debris were small tagasaste seedlings in their thousands. The seeds that had lain dormant over the year of drought were now in the process of germinating. Removing the branches would allow the sheep access to them, which would see them consumed like rare and delicate grass. This had been the fate of any that germinated further into the paddock in the open and exposed bare ground.

These small plants were not growing in the hedgerow, but just outside, up to three or four metres from the area that could be electrified. The hedgerow had moved. Before we again activated the electric fence, we would need to move it, but this time we would not have to plant trees in neat rows and at a certain distance apart. The new trees were located by nature's hand, and we will have to see how we find this situation. Maybe we can better work in with the natural system, become acquainted with its rhythms and come out of this experience with a greater understanding.

There is no natural farming. The term is a contradiction, a misnomer. Farming by its very definition cannot be natural and we no longer use the term. Trying to work in with nature means embracing both drought and flood, along with the most ideal weather conditions, and attempting to like it. Even though we have learnt from each drought, the next will display idiosyncrasies that expand our knowledge even more. Thankfully, it would seem that our education never ends.

For more on Charlie Schroeder's experiences with using tagasaste as stock feed during drought see GRs 151 and 152.

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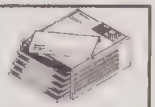

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# Box Solar Oven

by Nevin Sweeney, St Clair, NSW.

Having found out how to make a solar oven work, as I described to you last time, it was time to get serious. A cardboard no-tech oven is one thing, but I wanted something that would last and would be more efficient. I had picked up a book called *The Solar Cookery Book* by Beth and Dan Halacy, and in it was a description of how to make a more efficient, and more permanent, solar oven. The oven was an angled box made out of 19-millimetre plywood with a glass front and reflectors to make use of the sunlight over a greater surface area than just the top of the box itself. Here was a solar oven of substance!

The only time I seem to find to complete these major projects is over the Christmas break, and so it was with this one, it took about two full days of work to put together as well as some running around to get the glass front. The main body of the oven is constructed of 19-millimetre-thick marine plywood, and I was lucky enough to have a couple of 914-millimetre by 1.2-metre sheets of the stuff in my garage. A friend of mine in the business was able to get me some 25-millimetre-thick compressed fibreglass batts and I had some thin, galvanised steel sheet left over from a previous project.

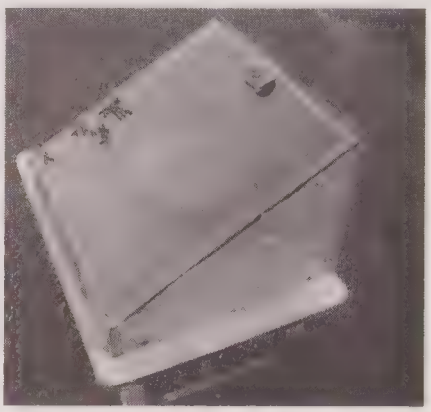
## THE BOX

I made the carcass of the cooker from three sheets of 19-millimetre marine plywood. The base was cut to 500 x 440 millimetres. The two sloping sides were made by cutting diagonally across a 440 x 420-millimetre sheet to give a long end of 330 millimetres and short end of 90 millimetres. The third sheet was to form the front and back of the cooker. It was originally 425 x 540 millimetres and a cut at an angle of 60° was made in the 425-millimetre side 90 millimetres from one end. All cuts were made with a hand-held 200-millimetre circular saw, the guide being tilted to achieve the 60° cut (see diagram).

I assembled these into an open-topped, angle-sided box by fitting the front, back and sides to the outside of the base and then gluing and screwing them into position. Once this was completed I cut the 25-millimetre fibreglass insulation using a metal ruler and Stanley knife; first the one to go over the base and then the sides, back and front. To hold the base pad in place I secured it with four flat-head nails about 50 millimetres in from each corner. The other pieces rested in place temporarily.

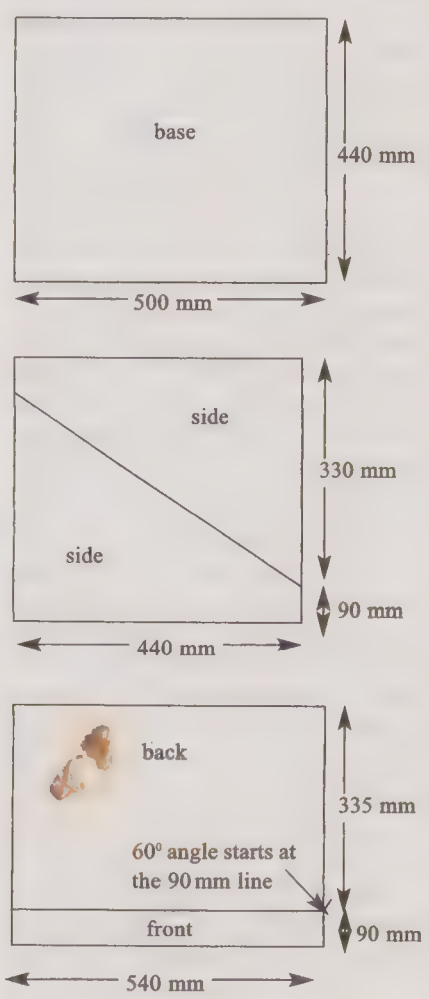
With tin snips I cut thin galvanised sheet to place over the fibreglass insulation. The one fitted to the base just rested on the four flat-head nails, but the front, back and both sides were nailed in place using two flat-head nails each that passed through the metal and fibreglass and into the wood, holding the entire assembly secure.

To finish off I applied two coats of matt black, high-temperature enamel from a spray can over the metal lining, the edges of the fibreglass and the edge of the wood. To fully dry the enamel and remove any trace of solvents I sat the whole box in the hot sun for a couple of days.

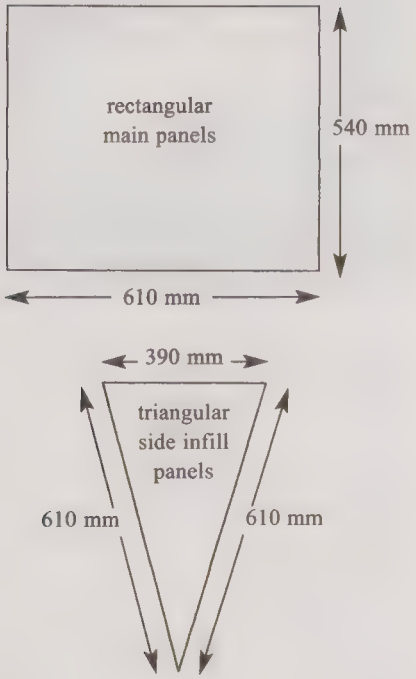


The next part was to acquire the glass front, so I approached a local glasscutter and explained what I wanted. The Halacy book specified double-strength window glass, which meant nothing to my glazier. Considering the temperatures that I hoped to develop (160° C+) he suggested special high-temperature glass at a cost of over $200 for the 520 x 520-millimetre sheet that I wanted. After

**Plywood Case Sheet Sizes**



**Reflector Sheet Sizes**




picking myself up off the floor I suggested that this was a tad outside my price range and was there no alternative? We agreed to try double thickness window glass (six millimetres instead of the standard three millimetres), but the glazier was somewhat sceptical that it would work. At a price of $20 for the piece I could afford a few mistakes!

The box had by now dried sufficiently for me to continue work on it. I fitted some dark brown felt strips to the top edge of the box to seal the edge where the glass sat on it. The felt works well, but faded to a light brown colour with the first use. So much for that idea. Now comes the test of your cabinet-making skills. The glass is absolutely flat and will show up any irregularities in the edge of your box, mercilessly. Yes, I did have a bit of fill in at the lower left-hand corner, where the 60° started out a bit wonky, so I shaved down a bit of thin wooden moulding that I had lying around and glued and tacked it in place with panel pins.

This left a 10-millimetre strip around the outside between the glass and the edge of the top of the box. I tacked on some split moulding to form a frame for the glass to sit in, and sit it did, reasonably well anyway.

Of course, the question could be asked 'how the hell do you get the glass on and off?'. I'm glad you did ask, because thereby hangs a tale! The ultimate idea was to drill a hole through the glass and fit a wooden knob secured by a screw. However, at this time I lacked a glass drill, so I quickly bent up a bit of galvanised steel into a U-shape, drilled a hole for the knob, which I installed, and then fitted the whole thing over the glass. It looked scrappy, but was serviceable. When I finally did get around to drilling the hole and fitting the knob, it was only a matter of weeks before there was a split through the centre of the glass plate, which seemed to originate at the hole.

Hmmm . . . that glazier may have been right . . . blast! I did think that it could have been due to the metal screw and the glass expanding and contracting under heat at different rates, but to be sure (after going back, cap in hand to get a new $20 piece of glass) I refitted the scrappy but serviceable steel and have had no further problems (that was over 12 months ago).

Once I had completed the box itself, I was impatient to try it out in full sun. I found it was able to reach from 90 to 100° C, but I wanted more!

**The Reflectors**

To increase the efficiency of the oven by increasing the area harvesting the sunlight, I made some reflectors. The more light and heat reflected into the oven, the higher the possible temperatures. The reflectors can be made from mirrors, but mirrors are heavy, expensive and fragile. Other possibilities are polished aluminium or mirror stainless steel, but these also tend to be expensive. To keep costs and weight down, I decided to use aluminium foil glued to three-millimetre medium density fibreboard (MDF), which has white melamine on one side.

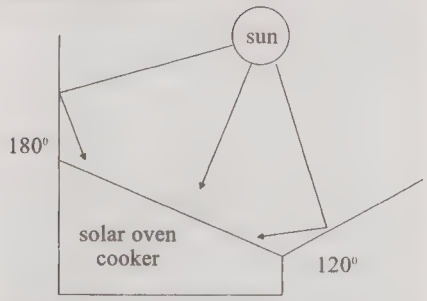
The reflector was made up of two different shaped sections, with four pieces of each section. The rectangular sections were 540 x 610 millimetres and were screwed onto the box with the 540-millimetre side against the side of the box. When these were screwed on there were four triangular spaces left in between the rectangular reflectors, which were filled by triangular sections

610 x 610 x 390 millimetres. The rectangular sections were fixed to the solar oven using two galvanised sheet metal brackets about 40 x 100 millimetres, bent to the required angle. The triangular sections were initially taped to the rectangular sections with packaging tape for testing, but this started to fall off and has now been replaced with two 50-millimetre galvanised hinges bolted between each section.

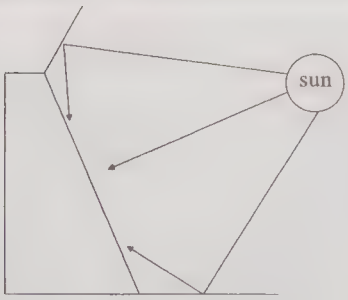
Prior to fitting, the reflector sections had to be covered with aluminium foil (you guessed it, shiny side out!) glued to the plain side of the MDF sheets. The best and most wrinkle-free way of doing this is to paint the MDF with glue (in this case PVA) and then set it down on the already laid out aluminium foil. This worked well with the triangular sections, but because of the size of the rectangular sections they could only be partially covered this way. The rest had to be applied by placing the foil onto the preglued surface, which resulted in more wrinkles.

While I have not done it yet, there is an aluminium foil tape available at hardware stores, and I have intentions

**Summer Position**




**Winter Position**

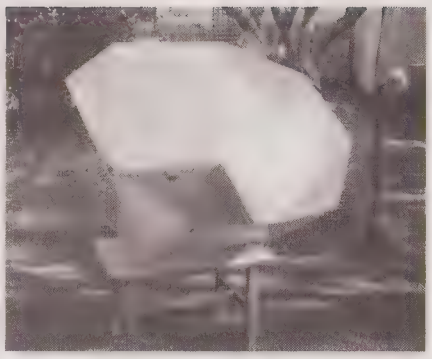



of getting hold of some and using it to tape up the joins, to reflect more light and give a neater appearance.

I attached the reflector to the solar oven box with self-tapping screws. If built to size, the angles should work out pretty well correct. To help in setting up, the angle between the back of the side panels and side of the cooker box should be 150°, the angle between the back of the top panel and the back of the cooker should be 180° (a straight line is formed), and the angle between the lower panel and the front side of the cooker (not the glass face) should be 120°. I used an ex-school protractor and the angles worked out okay.

The oven, once assembled, takes up a lot of space. Unless you have large amounts of free space (which we don't) it is handy to be able to separate and flatten out the reflector into sections for storage.

The oven works pretty well, developing 160° to 180° C in summer. It has produced some wonderful roasts and casseroles, but I think that it could do a lot more. My next trick will be to try baking bread in it. The oven is designed to be tipped up in winter, with what is normally the base of the oven becoming



the back wall. This allows the lower angle of the sun's rays to be used more effectively. Even so, the best I have been able to do in mid winter is 120° C. This is still hot enough to cook most things, even though it takes somewhat longer, but I think would not be hot enough for baking.

Although involving quite a bit of work, the building and using of the two ovens has been both educative and fun. When the sun shines we can use it directly and cut down our use of fossil fuels, which is a win for us and the environment.

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# The Art Of Baby Wearing

by Jayne Garrod, Chelsea, Vic.

Baby wearing – the practice of wearing your baby in a sling – is rapidly gaining in popularity as more and more parents discover the benefits it has to offer both parents and babies. It is a convenient, portable, hands-free method of transporting your baby with ease, and gives babies a sense of calm, security and trust when they are carried. Parents in traditional cultures have known this for thousands of years. It's a common sight to see women in tribal cultures carrying babies around in slings on their fronts, sides or backs. The women are able to work this way, while the babies are snug and secure close to mum.

## BENEFITS OF SLINGS

There are many benefits to be gained from wearing your baby in a sling.

### Babies Cry Less

Studies carried out by doctors, hospitals and childcare workers in the US have shown that infants who are carried throughout the day spend considerably less time crying than do those who are not. Anthropologists who travel throughout the world studying infant-care practices in other cultures agree that infants in baby-wearing cultures cry much less. Carrying your baby in a sling reduces his/her level of stress hormones. Sling-carried babies have a reduced incidence of colic and are less likely to vomit.

### Babies Learn More

Sling-carried babies spend more time in a state of quiet alertness, the behavioural state in which an infant is most content and best able to interact with his/her environment.

The natural movement and stimulation provided by being in a sling promotes neurological development. Because baby is intimately involved in the carer's world he/she is exposed to, and participates in, the environmental stimuli the carer selects and is protected from those stimuli that bombard or overload the developing nervous system.

### Slings Are Convenient

Wearing your baby is convenient. It is a lot easier to carry a sling around with you while away from home than to cart around a bulky stroller. Slings are lightweight, very portable, do not get caught in aisles while shopping and don't take up precious space while travelling by car, public transport, or plane.

### Babies Feel Secure

Babies and toddlers love being worn in a sling. Baby wearing simulates the sensations of pressure, motion, warmth and security of the womb. Babies feel safe, are close to their mum or dad, and are at a much better vantage point to take in the world around them.

It's great for other people who look after your baby: partners, relatives, carers and babysitters all have a ready way of connecting with, settling, and comforting your baby when they wear him/her in a sling.

### Feeding Is Easier

Slings are ideal for breast-feeding. The baby has constant and easy access to breast-feeding and feeding in public is easy and discreet. When lying down the baby is at exactly the right position to access the breast and the mum doesn't even have to be sitting down! Slings are also ideal for bottle-feeding, ensuring a close and natural bond between carer and baby.

### Premmies Are Healthier

Baby wearing has been shown to strongly benefit premature infants and lower their mortality rate. It is the ideal extension of 'Kangaroo Care' (skin-to-skin contact) a method favoured by midwives and obstetricians to promote parent/infant bonding in special care babies.

### Work Is Easier.

The carer is holding bub hands-free, so it's easier to do several things at once – something mums are constantly doing! It is also much easier to carry the baby for long periods of time, unlike holding bub in your arms, which tends to become heavy and tiring.

### Bonding Is Better

Baby wearing promotes a loving close bond between carer and baby. When the baby is held close in a sling, carer and baby become very sensitive to each other's gestures and facial expressions. The baby often has no need to cry because its needs are being met and anticipated.

### Sleep Is Promoted

Nothing soothes a baby to sleep faster than feeling safe, warm and secure next to its carer. Babies sleep longer and more comfortably when in a sling.

### Extended Use

Slings can be used to carry toddlers, from age one to four in the hip or back carry positions. Often toddlers refuse to be carried or pushed in a stroller and wish to assert their independence by walking. However, they often grow tired before you're ready to go home, so a sling is great backup! Toddlers who are carried in slings often initiate separation sooner and become more self-reliant.

## TYPES OF SLINGS & CARRIERS

There are a range of different ways of carrying a baby in a sling or similar carrier.

### Adjustable Slings

A baby carrier made from soft fabric, which is worn over the wearer's shoulder and under the opposite arm, is known as a sling. These are generally regarded among baby-wearing advocates as being the most versatile and easy to use of the baby carriers, as well as being the best for the wearer's back. Chiropractors also recommend soft carriers as being preferable for a baby's developing spine (this includes pouches, traditional carriers and wraps).

Adjustable slings can either be padded or unpadded and fastened with a clip or rings. Individual preferences differ as to which type is better, however, there are advantages to all types. Ring slings are easy to adjust while wearing the baby, but take a bit of practice initially. Clip slings are very easy to take on and off from the outset, but can be harder to adjust. The fabric in an unpadded ring sling can be pulled over the wearer's shoulder, thus evenly distributing the baby's weight, meaning the sling doesn't pull on the wearer's shoulders. Some wearers, however, find a padded sling more comfortable.

All these types of adjustable slings are extremely versatile and can be worn in numerous positions, including front, back, side, sitting up, lying down and facing in or out.

### Pouch Or Tube Slings

These consist of a piece of fabric hemmed and folded over to form a pouch where the baby lies. They are not adjustable, however, they are extremely easy to use and great for beginners. They are worn across the wearer's body in a similar manner to an adjustable sling. Generally they are more suitable for newborns and older babies, however, they can be used successfully with older toddlers also.

### Wraparounds

A wraparound carrier (or wrap carrier) consists of a long piece of cloth that is wrapped around the wearer (and baby) and then tied. There are many different ways to tie wraparounds, enabling your baby to be positioned in different positions. Most of the wraps go over both of the wearer's shoulders and around the waist, giving good support and security. Wraparound carriers can be either stretchy or nonstretchy depending on the wearer's preference.

### Traditional Carriers

A traditional carrier is basically a long piece of fabric or shawl that is wrapped around the wearer's body and tied in a knot. These can be worn in all of the positions described previously. This is definitely the cheapest option, but can be tricky and it takes time to get the hang of learning how to tie one.

### Upright Clip-on Carriers

These are the most commonly seen of the baby carriers and are available in most baby goods retail outlets. The advantage of these is they are easy to wear as most of them just clip neatly into place. They come in either hard or soft varieties, however, they can only be worn for a short period of time as the baby outgrows them quickly and they tend to hurt the wearer's back as the baby gets heavier. They can also be quite expensive.

### Where To Buy A Sling

**Adjustable Slings**

Baba Slings: www.babaslings.com
Ph: 1300-669-992.
Comfy Carry:
www.cairnsmidwifery.com.au
Ph: 1300-132-396.
Hip Bubby: www.hipbubby.com
Ph: 03-9774-3327.

**Pouch and Tube Slings**

Carrying Away Slings:
www.carryingaway.com

**Wraparound Slings**

Hug A Bub Baby Carrier:
www.hug-a-bub.com.au
Ph: 02- 6685-5589.

**Upright Clip-on Carriers**

The Australian Breastfeeding Association Mei Tai:
www.mothersdirect.com.au
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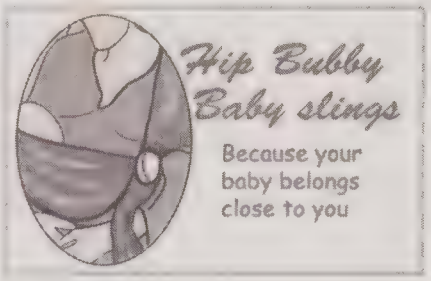

# Understanding Snakebite

by Vic the Vet.

Snakes! Strange isn't it that humans, members of the dominant power species on earth, are often reduced to a hysterical, screaming mess by the mere sight of a snake. What is it that terrifies us so?

The poor old snake has two mechanisms for survival: to slither off quickly, or coil up in the striking position and act tough. Luckily for snakes, they are brilliant at the disappearing act, otherwise they might have become extinct by now. No matter how many times they inflict their painless bite on an aggressor, they are almost certainly doomed when confronted by hunting animals. The aggressor may wobble around and die in the hours or days to come, but the unique structure of snakes means they rarely survive such confrontations.

Because some readers will be more familiar with pythons than with deadly specimens like browns or tigers, they may be interested to learn that venomous snakes branched off from constricting snakes several hundred million years ago; a once-off event that has pretty well left the snake world assorted into constricting crushers and venomous vipers, and rarely do the twain meet. This article is about the second group: the venomous vipers that frighten the life out of many animal and poultry owners and account for losses of stock.

## HOW VENOM WORKS

The snake's venom was not made to maim or mutilate, but to instantly paralyse its prey and initiate chemical digestion. This process makes sense because a snake doesn't have big crushing teeth to easily hold onto its prey and chew it into little pieces; it must rely on venom to kill and digest its prey.

The effects of venom are much the same in all mammals and depend on the strength or concentration in the victim's body. A toothful in a mouse or frog is about equal to the amount of blood in its heart or brain, hence its deadliness. A toothful in a human is probably equal to the blood in the nail of a little toe, so the toxic effects are usually gradual in onset and our bodies may have time to produce an immune response to neutralise the venom. This is why people who have been bitten are often left, under observation, to recover without antivenene.

Dogs are curious and love to pick objects up in their mouths, which can lead to trouble when they meet a snake.

It is this immune response to snake bite that enables CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratory) scientists to continually give their horses snake venom and periodically harvest their blood, which is full of antivenene. This in turn is the main reason doctors are often fairly loath to administer antivenene. Horse blood and human blood do not necessarily go well together; the cure could be worse than the cause.

## AFTER SNAKE ATTACK

The damage caused by snake venom doesn't follow a simple pattern. Because the role of venom is to instantly paralyse and commence chemical breakdown of the tissues, the first sign of envenomation is often a fit. Given the micro size of the prey snakes usually hunt, this probably means the venom instantly confuses and stuns. In bigger animals the fit stage is frequently followed by a period of normality, which may confuse both owner and vet and lead to a dangerous sense of security. Many bite victims die or suffer complications through delays caused by this quiescence. In humans this 'fit' presents as a massive headache, dizziness and nausea that sweeps over the victim.

Paralysis is the next stage of envenomation. Small victims of a snake, like mice or frogs, are paralysed in seconds. With large animals paralysis can take minutes or hours and be instant or gradual in onset. Symptoms from the majority of bites to humans take 12 – 24 hours to show. This in part is related to the fact that most humans are only bitten once; we don't suffer multiple bites through fighting or playing with the reptile.

The paralysis phase starts with a stupor and a stagger, followed by collapse. The paralysis then ascends from the back legs up to the chest. The outcome is probably fatal.

Earlier I mentioned that the damage from snake venom doesn't follow a simple pattern. If it did, and paralysis was all that was occurring, intervention could be successful. For example, even a badly bitten pooch could be put on a breathing machine and given time to eventually negate the venom. However, along with paralysing prey the snake venom also initiates chemical digestion. Put mildly this is the witch's brew that develops in a victim in the most cruel and unpredictable way. The blood clotting mechanism runs amuck and the muscles break down causing the urine to turn brownyred, which in turn stresses the liver and kidneys. Almost all the words in a

medicinal dictionary could apply to the damage caused by venom. The complications from snakebite can haunt a victim till death results.

## ANIMALS AND SNAKEBITE

As a rule, big animals don't drop with snakebite as do the micro-sized creatures preyed upon by snakes. This is in part because of their size, which dilutes the venom, but largely because their hide is impenetrable to snake fangs. Horses and cattle that do stagger have invariably been struck on the muzzle, usually as they innocently grazed.

### An Unlucky Cow

A recent bovine victim was an exception to this, and her case highlights how unlucky animals can be. The cow deteriorated, going down over a day, and died overnight. She had been in a herd that had been moved in the morning through a gateway where a huge brown snake had been seen. Most likely this cow had been bitten and her response contradicts my previous remarks that big is better with snakebite.

Frankly I'd hate to meet a snake whose fangs could penetrate cow hide. The most likely scenario is that the movement of the herd really stirred the snake up and the bovine victim had the misfortune of standing on it. The snake would have reared up and given several strikes into the lovely soft udder. The outcome? Good penetration of heaps of venom into blood-rich tissue and rapid uptake because the cows were on the move. The result was a high concentration of venom in the bloodstream and subsequent collapse and death.

### Dogs Can Be Dumb

There are many dogs that will poke their nose at a snake to sniff it, elicit a reaction and stir it up. Not surprisingly, they get bitten, and a Bull Terrier I saw not long back did exactly this and died. The dog was seen to vomit, have a fit and then return to normal. The remains of a tiger snake surrounded the scene and hung off the dog's teeth.

When the dog copped the bite to the face it had grabbed the snake in its middle and was tossing it from side to side, eventually breaking its back. Not, however, before the dog received several more fang marks around his torso. The outcome? Multiple bites to fleshy parts of the body and, because a dog is a fraction of the size of a cow, it was almost instantly envenomated. The return to normal that followed the vomiting and fit was followed within minutes by staggering, falling over and death from paralysis.

Cats are most likely to get bitten on a paw.

### Cats Have Nine Lives

Cats are efficient hunters that sometimes like to tease, but in general they kill first and ask questions later. They're not like dogs that sniff and stir up trouble. A cat brought in some time back had gone missing for a couple of days and was discovered under a bush on her side with eyes glazed and staring. She whimpered when picked up, then purred. A diagnosis of snakebite was made; the cat was paralysed and dehydrated, but not feeling too bad.

Puss had probably confronted a snake when on her rounds. She wouldn't have rushed in, but sat back and considered the interloper. She may have become bored and pawed at her prey. The snake, unimpressed, would have coiled up to indicate its intention. Egged on, the cat would have pawed again just as the snake attempted a half-hearted strike. If puss was unlucky, she might have been struck then. More likely, the snake would have become enraged and struck again, inciting the cat to respond. Contact could easily have resulted in a bite to the paw. The cat, hunting instincts fully aroused, would then have grabbed the snake by the neck and dug her jaws in until the snake weakened and stopped fighting.

Cats are lucky (those nine lives perhaps) because being so quick and having such small paws means a snake strike is often incomplete. One fang may enter the skin, but the other merely scratches or misses entirely. As well, the paw is an extremity with poor circulation and fewer fleshy parts and bare skin. This puss was probably half-bitten, with slow uptake of venom. Such a scenario would explain why it went down so slowly and was 'half-alive' when discovered. Probably by this time the cat was making its own antivenene. I decided to just support life with fluids and vitamins and let the patient do the rest. It did, and five days later it was discharged a wiser but happier cat.

## WHAT ABOUT ANTIVENENE?

The antidote to snakebite is antivenin, which, because it's so difficult to produce, is incredibly costly. You can count on it being around the $500 mark, and that doesn't include nursing fees and other medicines. If your beloved pet or expensive stud bull is bitten by a snake, is antivenene going to work?

Antivenene doesn't reverse the effects of snakebite, it stops it getting worse. You have to decide from the symptoms shown whether an animal has been bitten. The antivenene is best given sooner than later. A severely affected victim may still take several days to recover despite receiving the antivenene.

If a pet receives multiple bites, it will require more than one dose of the antivenene. Remember, it costs around $500 per dose. The pet may die anyway, either through excess envenomation or a complication to the kidneys, liver or similar. In addition, the antivenene may react and kill or complicate recovery of the victim.

Will the pet be okay if it survives? Probably, but the risk of long-term complications is always there. Most people consider this a small price to pay. The biggest issue for most pet owners is having to decide, under very stressful conditions, whether to risk their $500 or not. From experience, without antivenene most dogs die from snakebite and the majority of cats survive. The problem is, of course, that there are no guarantees of a successful outcome.

# Animal Antics

by Deborah McDonnell, Walpeup, Vic.

## PIG PROBLEMS

When I was little, I always wanted a pig. They were gorgeous little pink things with cute curly tails and pointed ears. I couldn't see why people thought they were disgusting, even when they rolled in mud, which only made me laugh.

This old love came rushing back with a pang of envy as I watched an acquaintance buying her very own piglet at last year's local show. It was a perfect little creature, from its pretty pink hide to its pixyish ears, and I wished that it was me carrying the little squealer away in delight.

I heard of this acquaintance again recently, and a curious story it was. She'd kept the pig in her poultry run. After a while birds started to go missing; a chook one day, a duck the next, every now and then a goose. She worried that it was a fox, but despite all her precautions birds still went missing. Then the pig started coughing up feathers. Yes – her precious pig had been the culprit all along, and was promptly banished to the old cow paddock. It's not a cute little pink thing anymore. Now it's a huge, ugly, snorting creature. Occasionally it escapes, wreaking a path of destruction and eating everything it can reach. Her little pink angel turned out to be a homicidal horror.

Somehow I don't envy her anymore.

## CAT POWER

People keep cats for company and amusement, for their winning charm and feline grace, and, quite often, as mousers. Cats have been kept as pets and companions for thousands of years. You'd think we'd know all there is to know about them, wouldn't you? And yet, I'm beginning to wonder if they don't have a hidden value we still hear little about.

One hot day last summer we looked out the kitchen window to see our little tabby cat, usually a mild, meek creature, chasing a full-grown brown snake out of the yard! This is certainly something I'd never heard of before. But it isn't all.

Not long ago my brother witnessed her mate, the local ginger stray, coming out of the children's bicycle shed with a thoroughly dead, 60-centimetre-long brown snake dangling from its jaws, which it then proceeded to eat.

Maybe cats could be of more value on the farm than we thought?


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# Fragrant Home Cleaning

by Jane Fairbrother, Marcoola, Qld.

Last time I shared some recipes for cleaning your home using natural fragrances to prepare for the festive season. I hope you tried some and were happy with the wonderful ambience that permeated your house. Domestic cleaning goes on all year round, of course, and here are some more recipes to help make the task as pleasant and as economical as possible.

## BATHROOM

### Bath Cleaner

Make a paste with 4 tablespoons of flour, 4 tablespoons of white vinegar, 8 tablespoons of hydrogen peroxide. Wearing protective gloves apply the mixture to the area and leave for two hours. Scrub with a brush and cold water. Wipe over with thyme tea made by pouring 2 cups of boiling water over 8 teaspoons of fresh thyme. Cover. Steep until cool. Strain and use as a last rinse for disinfecting hard surfaces and freshening air.

### Shower Mould

Add 4 drops tea tree oil to half a cup cloudy ammonia. Spray on. Leave for half an hour. Scrub. Rinse.

### Shower Curtains

To clean curtains and retard mould growth, mix a cup of white vinegar with 3 drops tea tree oil. Lightly wipe and scrub all over. Rinse off. Hang out to dry in the sun.

### Mirrors And Windows

Clean with paper towel and white vinegar. Take a second length of paper towel and dampen it. Sprinkle with 3 drops eucalyptus oil. Wipe all over the mirror. The oil will not be visible, room will be fragrant and fogging will be inhibited.

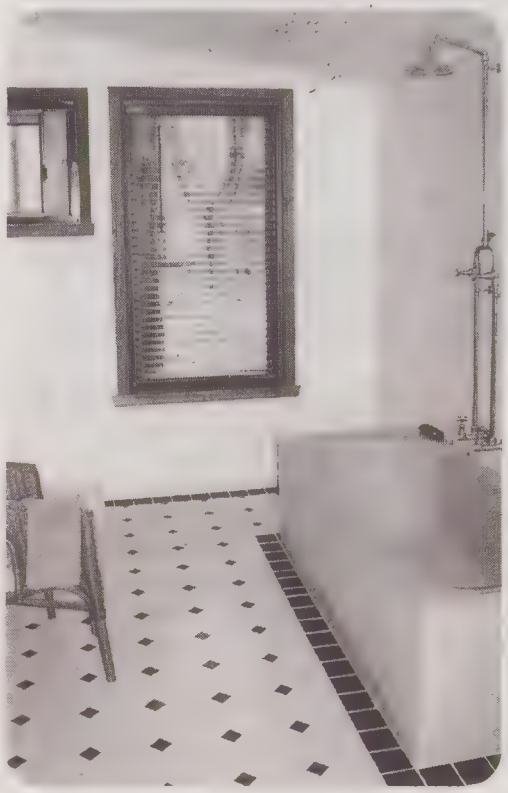
### Stained Grouting

A strong solution of Epsom salts in water to scrub grouting will help eliminate staining.

## KITCHEN

### Dishwashing Liquid

Strengthen your nails and add a pleasant fragrance and improved antiseptic action by adding lemon essential oil to the dishwashing liquid, 1 drop per 1 millilitre of liquid.



### Cockroach And Ant Deterrent

After cleaning cupboards add to half a bucket of hot water:

1 cup rosemary tea
1 cup peppermint tea
3 drops kerosene
6 drops peppermint oil

Wipe solution over interior of cupboards and allow to dry.

### Greasy Surfaces

To 4 tablespoons of cloudy ammonia add 2 drops tea tree oil. Use on a scourer to scrub area. Wipe away with clean damp cloth.

### Fridge And Freezer Seals

Seals should be wiped over with tea tree essential oil in thyme tea to retard mould; use 10 drops tea tree oil, half a teaspoon vodka and one cup strong thyme tea mixed well. When the seal is dry after cleaning, lightly sprinkle with talcum powder.

### Chopping Boards

To disinfect a wooden chopping board wipe a cut lemon over it and leave in the sun.

### Silver

To clean silver fill the kitchen sink with hot water. Add a sheet of aluminium foil and a handful of salt. Immerse the silver and leave for 3 minutes. Rinse and polish dry.

### Ovens

Cleaning is made easier by placing half a cup filled with ammonia inside the oven at night. The next day any burnt on food and grease will wipe off more easily.

## CARPET CLEANER

Dissolve ½ cup pure soap flakes or grated pure soap in 2 cups boiling water. Cool. Add 6 drops of chosen essential oil. Whip until stiff. Apply to small area at a time. Allow to dry. Remove residue. Wipe with a damp cloth. When carpet is almost dry, brush up the pile.

## FLOOR CLEANER

Clean the floor in your normal manner. To the last rinse water add:

2 drops peppermint oil
2 drops eucalyptus oil
2 drops lemon oil
a splash methylated spirits
1 cup strained herbal tea

## LAUNDRY

### Ironing Spray

A weak tea from your choice of peppermint, rosemary or lavender.

## GENERAL STAIN REMOVAL

**Beetroot**
Act immediately. Stretch fabric over a basin. Sprinkle with table salt. Pour hot water through it. Rinse in cold water. Wash as normal.

**Ink, Ballpoint Pen**
On natural fibres, sponge in methylated spirits. Place an absorbent pad of fabric underneath garment. Wash as normal. On acetates, mix 1 part methylated spirits and 2 parts cold water. Sponge or soak. As above.

**Grease And Oil**
Mix kaolin (china clay from chemist) with enough water to make a paste. Spread over stained area. Leave 24 – 36 hours until completely dry. Work it with a stiff brush then shake out or vacuum off.

**Perspiration On Wool**
Fresh stains, sponge with white vinegar, then wash in warm soapy water.

Old stains, make a paste of 1 tablespoon cream of tartar and 3 crushed aspirins in water. Leave to dry and then rinse thoroughly.

**Ink On Carpet**
Immediately cover with salt to absorb stain. Vacuum up.

**Mildew On Clothes**
Sponge with lemon juice. Leave in sun until mildew spores are gone.

**Blood**
Soak in cold very salty water when fresh. Then wash in warm (not hot) soapy water. Heat will set the stain.

**Hand Wash**
Keep leftover soap slivers with a few sprigs of rosemary in the base of a stocking hanging over the tub to clean very dirty hands.

**Nappies**
Soak overnight in 30 – 40 grams of baking soda dissolved in a bucket of warm water. Wash in hot soapy water.

Strong lavender tea with lavender essential oil added is an excellent antibacterial addition to the soaking water.

**Wool Wash**
Add rosemary and lavender essential oils to wool wash and fabric softener as a moth repellent.

Alternatively, place 4 teaspoons dried lavender in a ceramic bowl. Pour in 1 litre boiling water. Cover. Leave overnight. Strain.

**Antibacterial Final Clothes Rinse**
A cup of cooled rosemary tea is antibacterial and an excellent moth repellent.

Alternatively, add 10 drops tea tree oil to a standard bottle of fabric softener.

**Drains**
1 cup bicarbonate soda
1 cup salt
¼ cup cream of tartar

Put all in a sealed jar. Shake well until well combined. Pour ¼ cup of mixture down the drain, followed by 2 cups of boiling water, then 2 cups of strained lemon grass and thyme tea.

**Hand-Washing Mixture For Delicates**
500 g grated pure soap
1 lt lavender water (made as a strong herb tea)
1 tbsp borax
5 drops rosemary oil
5 drops lavender oil

Combine first three ingredients in a saucepan. Bring to boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Before completely cool add essential oils and stir well. Leave to cool. Store in a large wide-mouthed jar.

For hand-washing use half to 1 cup of mixture, or on the gentle cycle in a machine use 2 – 3 cups.

### FRAGRANCE SENSITIVITY

Halifax, Nova Scotia, has become the first major North American city to ban the wearing of fragrances in public places.

### CHEST RUB

To 250 grams of sorbolene add ½ teaspoon eucalyptus and peppermint oils, 1 teaspoon lavender, cajeput and thyme oils. Stir until blended. The effect should be gentle and warming.

### MOUSE BAIT

Try baiting your mouse trap with Blutack covered with bird or pumpkin seed. The mice love it!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# BUYING A SECOND-HAND TRACTOR

by Peter Crawley, Oakleigh, Vic.

I have performed much research into this topic recently because I was strongly tempted to buy a second-hand older-style tractor. It had the weight to do the job, was simple and had a fully documented history. I needed to decide if it was the right tractor to buy for my requirements.

When I looked around there was a surprising number of machines available in almost every shape and size imaginable. The more I looked, the more confused I became, so I went back to first principles and analysed my needs. I hope my experience might also assist you to make a clear-headed decision.

## LOOK AT WHAT YOU NEED

It is amazing how many people buy the wrong type of tractor. The problem normally arises when people don't look at the topography of the land or what they want to do with their tractor.

The first step is to determine the implements or attachments you need and from this you can determine the tractor's required horsepower and weight. When researching this, do check the attachment manufacturer's paperwork as this normally provides details on the required horsepower and, in cases, the recommended tractor weight. Thorough research is good insurance.

Now look at the topography of the property. If the land is hilly, a tricycle-type tractor would be unsuitable because of their tendency to roll over on hillsides. However, a tricycle-type tractor is perfectly acceptable on most flat acreages.

At this point you should be able to classify the available tractor models into at least a few major categories based on stability, weight, power and available implements and attachments. The model that best fits your requirements can then be selected.

## MECHANICS

Once the model is selected, your preview of the available machines is almost entirely an exercise in mechanics; the cosmetics should be placed low on the list. Your machine must be mechanically sound from the onset so you will have few problems in the near future. It has to start easily, run well when hot, charge the electrical system, pick up implements and attachments, brake well, steer well and get good traction. Most of us do not have a full workshop of tools, so have to rely on our eyes, ears and common sense to determine if a machine is acceptable or not.

Even though you are probably going to use your basic senses and common sense to evaluate the machine, you

should be armed with the critical knowledge on the operation of the tractor you are previewing. Borrow or purchase the owner's manual prior to going out for the preview so you are familiar with its operation and basic specs. Many libraries in country towns actually have tractor manuals available for loan. If it is an unusual model, talk to individuals from tractor clubs as they usually have manuals available or knowledge that cannot be obtained anywhere else.

To help you with this common sense approach here is a basic checklist for a simple preview of a working tractor.

**Does It Start Easily?**
A tractor that starts easily may eliminate several items in one shot. Good battery, compression, ignition wiring, magneto, tune-up, fuel flow and carb are implied (not guaranteed) by this. If it doesn't start easily, it still could be a good machine, but you won't escape some work on it. If the tractor is out and warmed up prior to your arrival, you lose an important checklist item, namely the cold start, so make sure you forewarn the owner not to start the tractor before you arrive.

**Does It Smoke?**
Blue smoke indicates many potentially difficult problems in rings, pistons or valve guides. White or black smoke can frequently be corrected with carburation or ignition changes, but still represents work.

**Does It Make Clunking Noises?**
A simple ticking from the top of the engine might be cured by an uncomplicated valve adjustment, but a deep thunk from the bottom or middle of the engine could indicate very serious and expensive repairs. If the clunk is more pronounced under load, this could be an indication of problems with the crankshaft, bearings or piston rods. This point must be checked when the engine is both cold and hot.

**Is There Head Seepage?**
Look for signs that fluids are seeping from the head gasket while the engine is running and hot, then later after you have turned it off. If the tractor is encrusted with grease and dirt, this can cover obvious signs of seepage.

**Is The Clutch Good?**
The clutch is not very expensive to replace, but splitting the tractor in half to do so is beyond what most of us want to do.

**Check The Charging System**
There should be a slight charge shown on the ammeter when the engine is running and a change in the charging level when the lights are turned on (this indicates that the regulator or resistor switch and cutout is operating). At running speed, no discharge should be shown.

**Work The Hydraulics**
Check the full range of the rams by extending them with a load. Let the load sit in the hold position for a period of time to be sure that there is no leakage. Chattering noises from the pump while lifting indicate the pump is getting insufficient flow of hydraulic fluid. The pump will have experienced excessive wear when run this way for long periods of time and might be ready to fail.

**Do The Brakes Work Well?**
Although the brakes are inexpensive to replace, they are inaccessible on many tractors and will require extensive teardown to get the new ones in. You can test the brakes by locking one wheel and cranking the steering to that side. The tractor should spin and the wheel should not rotate.

**Does It Run Well When Hot?**
Getting the engine hot is a must if you want to find out how it will work after you've ploughed the first row. There are both simple and complex problems that can cause the tractor to run poorly after it warms up. Plan on spending a half-hour running it. After running, look for leaks, both oil and antifreeze. Finally, after warm-up, shut it down and see if it will start.

**How Does The Oil Look?**
After you have run it for a while, stop the engine and check the oil for foaming or presence of water. This is a show stopper.

**Look For Structural Cracks**
This takes a bit of time but it is well spent. Go over the cast and steel components and look for hairline cracks. These are not expensive to correct, but extremely time consuming, and it would be unwise to work a tractor until such problems are corrected.

**EVALUATION**
If your preview fails in some of these areas, you might find that the seller is willing to come way down on price (since you found all the problems). At this point you must determine if you have the time to correct what you found, and pocket the savings. If your tractor needs are time-critical, pass this one up.

A word of caution: If the tractor is not running the day you preview it, you cannot evaluate it. The seller may say, in all honesty, that everything checked out fine the day it was parked, but when a tractor sits, serious problems can develop. In such cases, you must start your bidding from nearly scrap level prices since you have no idea what you're getting into. If you buy many tractors, you will find that this scenario is common.

## TRACTOR TIPS

Know your needs, budget and what's on the market. Be as knowledgeable on the prospective machine as you can be through research and conversation and physically check it out to the best of your ability. Remember, your new tractor will become a part of the family for some time to come.

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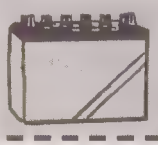

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# Water Where It's Needed

by Alan Stewart, Alexandra Hills, Qld.

Some readers might remember a short article I wrote a couple of years ago about using old soft-drink bottles to water plants. As a gentle reminder, and for the benefit of new readers, I'll elaborate a little on the concept. With water in ever shorter supply and restrictions a fact of life for increasing numbers of people, we need to employ every method we can to use this resource cannily. When the method also involves reusing someone else's junk, it's especially gratifying. This method directs water to the root zone of individual plants and there is no evaporation. The only thing you need to buy is a small pack of coconut fibre (about $5).

• First, collect a number of large plastic soft-drink or juice bottles.

• Drill a small hole into the cap to allow water to slowly trickle out.

• Make a hole in the base of the bottle through which water can enter, either from your hose or a watering can.

• Buy a pack of coconut fibre and jam a small plug of this into the cap of each bottle to act as a filter.

• Now insert the cap and neck of the bottle into the soil close to the plant.

• Fill the bottle with water and leave it to trickle to the root zone.

• You can use this method for shrubs and small trees and the larger vegies; it's even suitable for pot plants.

• If the hole in the cap becomes blocked, just remove the coconut fibre plug, clean out the blockage and reinsert the plug.

Bottle-watering is cheap and efficient.


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# Divine Water

by Moira Warr, Kaoota, Tas.

Do you believe in the power of water diviners? Many people feel that they are akin to tooth fairies, but I'm not sure we should discount the abilities of these water telepathists.

The subject of divining arose recently when we were trying to drill for water, the most precious resource on our planet. Some hydrologists say the wars of next century will be fought over water, not oil. Having heard the faint beat of drums on our own horizon, I am inclined to agree. Leaky dams, murky water holes and tanks with water clinging to the last rung have replenished less quickly in recent summers.

Water, or lack of, evokes many emotions and perhaps a degree of recklessness. Drilling dry holes can be costly, both in terms of money and wellbeing, but we decided to forge ahead and try our luck.

Our water bore specialist, already working in the district, albeit with little success, arrived with his men and massive machinery. Animals scattered in all directions. Not so the locals. Attracted by the interminable drilling noise, a cross between a jackhammer and a dentist's drill, they started drifting in from the hills and valleys.

'We'll drill here', our expert had said the day before. 'Close to the house. Cheaper for putting the power on to the pump.'

Scientific reasoning now out of the way, the show could begin. By no means a genteel device, the drill cut into the arid soil with brutal force. The anticipation of rewards worth more than gold (let's face it, you can't drink gold) produced an air of expectation and a strange euphoria. Well, initially anyway.

'They can have their job!', shouted a dusty neighbour as we all leaned on the post and rail fence, unfortunately just within reach of the mudstone dust that was billowing into our eyes and hair. All day long we waited and watched for that magical moment when this elusive, aqueous substance would deluge us and wash away the grit.

'Just another metre . . . another half-hour . . . another pipe and we'll hit water', I kept promising myself.

It was at about this stage that diviners were mentioned. Phew! Immediately I could sense there were few believers, especially amongst the 'sea-changers' in the audience. A bold but reckless farmer mentioned the name of a diviner.

'Three hundred feet! Wanna try a bit further?', yelled the boss.

'Try another 20', came the response from my dejected spouse. Meanwhile, I mentally calculated the final cost of our sad, dry hole and shuddered. At our dusty feet lay a large pile of mudstone dust, enough to make a mud face pack for every man, woman and child in Australia. Another 20, another 50, another 100 feet; what difference would it make? Imperial or metric? Not a drop!

Cruelly deprived of a spectacle, the bored, powder-coated neighbours drifted away. The workmen began packing up. Feeling panic, I briefly consulted with my disheartened husband, then turned to the drilling crew.

'Are you moving the equipment out tonight?'

'No love, tomorrow morning.'

'Would you be willing to have a go somewhere else on the farm tomorrow before you leave?'

'We can give it another go.'

Finding the elusive water diviner in the phone book seemed to take forever.

'Yes! Come now! Tonight! Pleeeease!', I shrieked.

Dragged from his fireside at dusk, he arrived within the hour. Removing some willow canes from the boot of his car, our man proceeded to inform us of his amazing credentials. I wondered why I had never heard of this wizard before.

How do you locate an abundant water supply from what seems to be solid earth? Our diviner struggled with wilful, arching canes and then marked the magic spot exactly where two underground streams crossed in north-south and east-west directions. Fascinating! However, 15 minutes of predictions does not come cheap. Despondently, I wrote the cheque.

That small stick, which sat above those so-called invisible silent watercourses, represented our dreams. Unfortunately though, it happened to be protruding only a metre or two from the ill-fated drilling site.

I didn't sleep well that night. Luckily, my sceptical city-bred husband did not object to my impulsiveness. He was almost too willing to show the drillers my questionable exhibit next morning. I am ashamed to say that I bunkered down behind the curtains fearing that shortly my name would be mud. Certainly not water! All too soon the piercing noise permeated the house. More dust, more despair and more stickybeaks arriving for a dustbath.

I am delighted to say that this story did not end on a dry note. In fact, you might still be able to hear the champagne corks popping.. Yes! Water! Water, water, everywhere. Just after I arrived at the work site, rather reluctantly, carrying a tray with the coffee and bickies, out it gushed. Lots of it, good quality and enough to keep the Murray River flowing forever. Simply divine.

# RECYCLING RUNS RIOT

## *Newspaper Housing?*

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

After the shock of tyre wall houses, has anyone thought of the possibility of newspaper wall houses? These would be similar in construction to straw bale houses, but still cheaper. Perhaps you could approach your local newsagent for old papers; he/she has to pay a waste company to dispose of them so might even pay you to take them. Alternatively, you could prowl the streets on the night before the recycling collectors visit.

Paper has good insulating properties and, if the paper bales are sprayed with a fire retardant such as Firestop, should have a fire rating of at least an hour, which is long enough to repel a bushfire threat. Paper doesn't smell either, so less render would be needed inside and outside than for a tyre wall house.

I envisage the bales of newspaper being wired together for stability, as is done with tyre walls. Lightweight chicken wire could be wrapped around the walls to help with adhesion of the render.

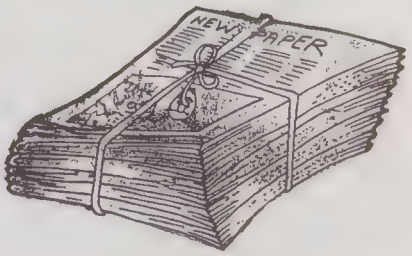
For binding the papers into bales you could use 12-millimetre plastic strapping with fastening buckles. Both strapping and buckles are very cheap, costing less than baling wire and being easier to use. Size of bales could be adapted to suit each person's lifting abilities.

Wall thickness could also be adjusted to meet personal requirements, unlike tyre walls where the thickness is dictated by the diameter of the tyres used. For infill walls, as distinct from load-bearing structural walls, a thickness of 30 centimetres would suffice, unless extra insulation was desired. A post and beam roof supporting system or a steel-framed machinery or hay shed would use infill walls.

As with tyre wall building, a newspaper bale structure could have electrical conduit and other piping strapped down to the newspaper bales prior to rendering. Before rendering you would also spray the newspaper with an approved fire retardant, of which there are many available. Fire retardants are normally used for fireproofing a range of absorbent building materials. When the fire retardant chemical becomes hot in a fire situation it emits carbon dioxide, which prevents the sprayed material from igniting.

So there you have another recycling opportunity, which means the forests haven't been chopped down for nothing.

Look up articles on tyre wall houses in GRs 156, 158 and 166.




### NEWSPRINT RECYCLING

Victoria has the highest rate of newspaper recovery and recycling in Australia, with 137,224 tonnes of newsprint, or 74.8 percent, being recovered in 2001.

### WOODCHIPPING

The woodchip industry consumes about 6.4 million tonnes of wood per year in Australia. Many people do not realise that firewood extraction is the next biggest consumer of Australia's forests, with 6.1 million tonnes being harvested each year. In Victoria, 60 percent of that comes from the woodlands and box-ironbark forests.

### PAPER FOR COMPOST

Forty thousand tonnes of paper waste a year will be diverted from landfill, reducing greenhouse gases and benefiting agriculture. The Pinegro facility in Melbourne's western suburbs will process previously 'unrecyclable' paper waste into compost products to be used in agriculture, viticulture and horticulture.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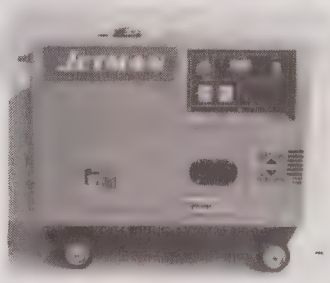

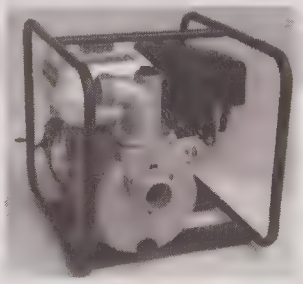

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# Basics Of Jam Making

by Dan Peel, Korumburra, Vic.

If you're a newcomer to jam making, it is handy if you understand how the process works. Buy or borrow a book on the subject so you're informed and know which shortcuts will work and which will bring failure. With all the effort involved, you want your jam to be a success.

Keep squashy overripe fruit for juicing; to make jam it is better if fruit is just ripe or a little under – that's when the pectin content is highest. Pectin is a component of fruit and works with natural acids and sugar to promote setting. Fruits range in pectin content and the amount diminishes as ripening occurs. How do you know which fruits are high and which low? Any good jam-making book will have a list or table.

Fruit also contains natural acids in varying amounts. A simple example is a tart cooking apple as compared to an eating variety. Fruit high in pectin is generally also high in acids and, like pectin, acids are at optimum levels in just-ripe or slightly under-ripe fruit. The acids extract the pectin from the simmering fruit and reduce the likelihood of sugar crystallising. Lots of recipes suggest adding lemon juice because this boosts the level of natural acids. Lemon juice is most effective if added at the start of simmering the fruit so it has ample time to do its job.

What if the fruit you have is low in pectin? Some people add a second fruit to the mixture that is high in pectin, for example plums to raspberries or apples to blackberries, to boost the content. Alternatively, you can buy commercially prepared pectin, Jamsetta being a popular variety, and add it, following packet directions carefully.

Sugar is also integral to the jelling or setting process. White sugar gets best results, raw can be substituted, but never use brown sugar; it contains treacle and produces a poor colour. Don't be tempted to readjust sugar content or you may end up with syrupy, fermented or crystallised jam. Many cooks warm sugar in the oven before adding it to the fruit so it dissolves quicker.

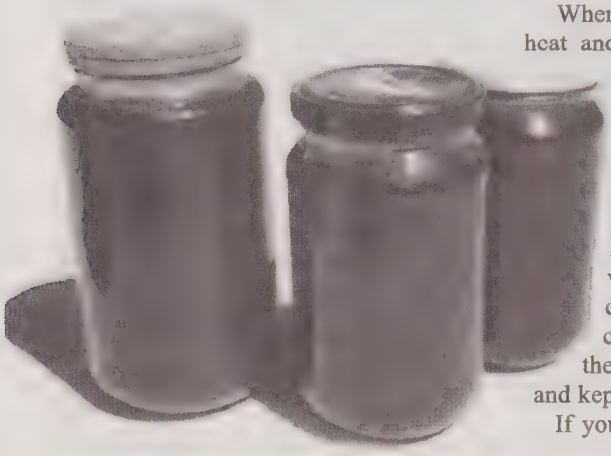
With fruit of an appropriate quality chosen, and necessary preparation done – peeling, cutting, removing stones and stems – you're ready to undertake the first stage of cooking. It's wise to run a knob of butter or margarine around the base of the saucepan to prevent burning. Fruit (and water) are simmered or cooked slowly until soft so pectin is released. Then sugar is added and the mixture brought to the boil. A wooden spoon is a must for both stages as stirring prevents burning. When mixture thickens, spoon a teaspoonful onto a chilled saucer, wait several minutes and check for a wrinkled surface, a sign it is ready. Continue boiling if it stays liquid.

When jam is cooked, remove from heat and stand for about 10 minutes, skimming the top with a large spoon to remove scum and froth. Jars should have been sterilised and warmed slightly so they will not crack when filled with the hot mixture. Placing jars on thick newspaper while filling helps prevent cracking. Seal when cool with cellophane covers dampened on the outer side with a moist cloth and kept firm with a rubber band.

If your recipe recommends different steps to these, follow it; my advice is very general and some fruits or recipes may require quite specific directions. Once you've made jam a couple of times you'll understand the process better and have the confidence to try unusual fruits, or feel your produce is up to the scrutiny of the experts at the local show.

### JAM TIPS

- Wear a rubber glove when stirring jam to avoid hand burns from hot splats.
- Do not use overripe fruit for jam making – there is less pectin in it and the jam may not set.
- Use the spout section of a plastic funnel to avoid spills when pouring jam into jars.
- Make sure sugar is completely dissolved before bringing jam mixture back to the boil.
- For marmalade, cook pith and pips in a muslin bag in the mixture.
- Runny jam can be reboiled and have Jamsetta added or kept for use as a topping sauce.
- Mulberries are low in pectin so combine with apples, lemon juice or plums when making jam.
- To prevent mould forming on top of jam, when it is cold pour a teaspoon of vinegar or brandy on top, or seal jams with 0.3 cm thickness of paraffin wax.



# WHAT'S ON

### TASTE VICTORIA
If you like a tasty treat or a tiny tipple, head down to Taste of Victoria 2005, held at Flemington Racecourse. With more than 130 exhibitors of food, wine and beer, you can taste, shop and sip through all the different regions of Victoria. Yum. Taste of Victoria is held on 12 and 13 February 2005.

### FESTIVE FOREST
SA's Bundaleer Forest will ring with music and festivity from Friday 11 to Sunday 13 March. The colours of autumn and the natural amphitheatre make it an idyllic setting for a weekend of arts, cultural celebrations and country hospitality. New Zealand bass/baritone Teddy Tahu Rhodes will perform along with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and many other bands and musicians. Bundaleer is near Jamestown. For details, contact the Bundaleer Weekend office on 08-8664-0455, or visit www.bundaleerweekend.com.au

### WORKING HORSES
The 2005 Churchill Island Working Horse Festival is being held on 26 and 27 March, Easter weekend. Head over and see working horse displays and pioneer skills and crafts, music and entertainment, and great food, wine and local produce. Children's events include old-time games, ranger-led walks, and working sheep dogs and bullock teams. For information, call: 03-5951-2823 or www.penguins.org.au

### WALK AGAINST WANT
Every step helps – the Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Walk Against Want is a national event, open to anyone, which raises funds to help poor communities in over 30 developing countries worldwide. This year it's on Sunday 6 March in Victoria and Tasmania, and Sunday 13 March in all other states. If you wish to walk, call: 1800-034-034, or find locations at website: www.oxfam.org.au/walk/

### COME AND SEE US!
Yes, Grass Roots will be at the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo again this year, so drop in to our stall and say hello. We will be selling GR books, binders and back issues, so bring your wanted list, or even fax us beforehand and we'll bring your order to the expo (and you'll save on postage as well). There's more than just us; great local produce to munch, stalls on building, organics, horticulture, farming and more to visit, animals to see and lectures to go to. On 11 – 13 February at Seymour, Victoria. Info at: www.seymourexpo.com See you there!

### SUSTAINABLE LIVING TOUR
The very first Armidale Sustainable Living Tour will be held on 12 and 13 March in Armidale, NSW. Organiser Robyn says there will be an amazing array of innovative, creative structures and gardens open to tour, including tyre construction, straw bale and rammed earth, as well as conventional buildings modified to reflect sustainable practices. Organic, biodynamic and permie gardens also featured. For details contact Robyn Newberry, 02-6775-3877.

### RETREAT AND SPIN
Handweavers and Spinners Guild of Victoria are inviting members and friends to join them for a retreat at Harrietville on Friday 1 to Sunday 3 April. Activities include shibora and transfer printing, scrumbling, selecting natural protein fibres and more. All meals are provided, accommodation is dormitory style. Take walking boots and enjoy the beaut scenery. It's at Mountain View Holiday Retreat, and costs $150. Contact Ruth McLaine at the Guild, 12-20 Shakespeare St, Carlton North 3054.

### FARM FAIR
The Karoonda Farm Fair is a field day covering all aspects of farming, with shearing demos, yarding displays, irrigation, prime lambs, cooking and more. It's on Friday 1 and Saturday 2 April at Karoonda, SA. Contact Ray Bald, 08-8538-2860.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**SEEKING A BETTER WAY?**

In this harsh and materialistic world, the gentle-hearted seek a home. Both young and old find themselves in the midst of a world greatly changed from the ideal that God would have man enjoy. Do you long to get back to God, and live a simple life in the country, baking bread, wearing traditional modest clothing, living in a cottage among others who feel as you do?

We believe God made all things, and that He is not happy with the way we humans go about our business today. Both men and women have been drawn into competition with one another, rather than being companions of a common cause, that of raising good children in a kind of tribal environment where there is a strong sense of identity and belonging. Swimming against the tide can seem like a lonely thing to do, but if you have faith to resist the strong delusions and the propaganda of our time, then you may be pleasantly surprised to find there are others just like you.

You are welcome to contact us at:
Email: hopehillcommunity@hotmail.com

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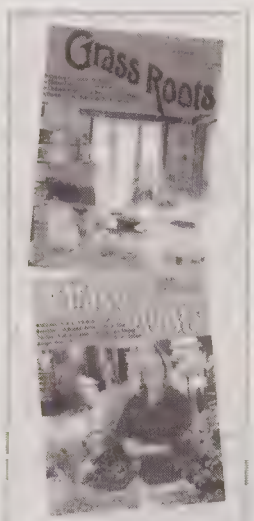


**Cheap Back Issues!**
Head to the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo and pick up your missing back issues at show prices and postage free!
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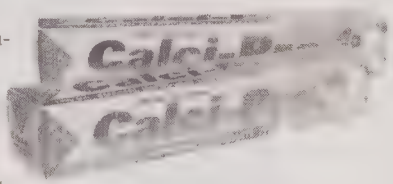
# ROUND THE MARKET PLACE

**We hope you enjoy this feature introducing new products relevant to readers' lifestyles and interests.**

## MILK TOOTHPASTE



Calci-pro is the first milk-based toothpaste to be available in Australia. Protein extracted from milk has been developed into an ingredient named Phoscal. It is said to restore and improve tooth enamel, prevent tooth decay, reduce plaque build-up and have a long-term whitening effect. What's more, it's fluoride free. The toothpaste has a minty flavour and needs little mouth rinsing because it contains no sodium laurel sulphate foaming agent. Calci-pro is not suitable for people with allergies to milk and milk products. It is available in health foods stores at a recommended retail price of $6.95.

**For further information on Calci-pro contact Brigitte Claney: 03-9827-0422, 0412-189-558.**

## SPHERICAL SOLAR CELLS ON THE WAY

A new type of solar cell in the shape of tiny spheres could broaden the applications for solar cell use. Flexible and transparent solar panels can be made by imbedding the tiny spheres into plastic sheeting of any size. The cells are more efficient than conventional flat panels at converting indirect radiation because they convert light falling on their whole surface area. With a reflective backing material the cells' efficiency can be even greater. Canadian company Spherical Solar Power has recently begun commercial production of flexible solar panels for marine and camping applications with production of larger panels to follow. A Japanese company, Kyosemi, has a similar concept at prototype stage.

**For more information contact: www.spheralsolar.com or www.kyosemi.co.jp/eghome.html**

## A DESIRABLE TRAP

Controlling garden and orchard pests without using dangerous chemicals is always a challenge for organic growers. Desire Pest Control Products manufactures a range of organic-certified traps to effectively and safely control a number of common pest insects. There are pheromone traps to control codling moth in apples and pears, Oriental fruit moth in peaches and nectarines, Californian red scale in citrus and ornamentals, San Jose scale in fruit trees and ornamentals and heliothis in vegetables. Adhesive colour traps are available for thrip, whitefly and leafminer in flowers and vegetables. The traps are suitable for home gardens and commercial orchards, keep working for lengthy periods and are simple to recharge for continuous crop protection.

**Available from Russell Fox, Desire Pest Control, 6 Sims Rd, Cobram 3644. Ph: 03-5871-1650, 0428-570-394.**
**Email: foxyden@bigpond.com**

## FOOD FOR SKIN

Australian company Miessence is believed to be the first in the world offering a comprehensive range of personal care products certified by leading international organic certifying bodies. All Miessence products are certified to food-grade standards. The roll-on deodorant, for example, contains purified water, aloe vera, bicarb soda, xanthum gum, grapefruit seed extract and essential oils of bergamot, lime, ylang ylang, patchouli and geranium. The deodorant is also available with a spice scent or unscented. The range is available from some health food stores and natural health practitioners.

**For more information see the website: www.discover.miessence.com**
**Email: organics@caramba.com.au**

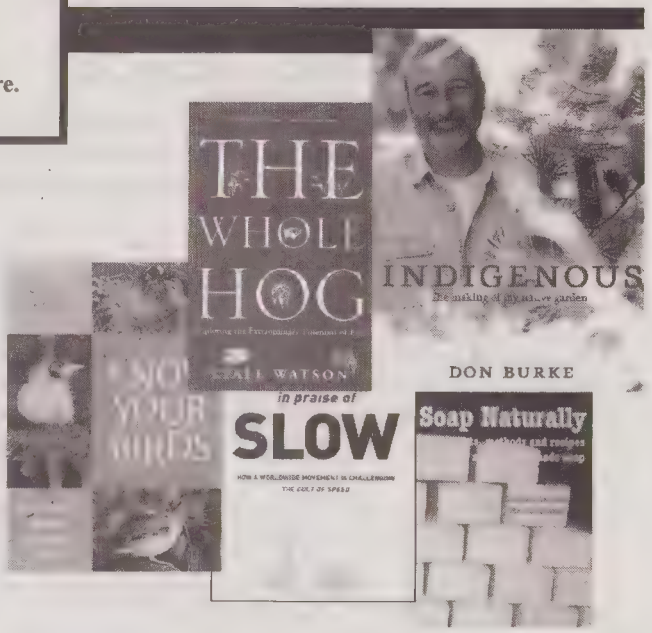
## GLUTEN-FREE CHOCOLATE

Said to be a world first, this chocolate bar is soy based (thus is dairy free) to suit lactose intolerance, gluten-free and cholesterol free. Australian company, Sweet William, produces these chocolate bars for the health conscious in plain, almond or tangerine flavours. They are high in protein, contain antioxidants, vitamins E, B1 and B2, folate, thiamine, calcium, iron and zinc. It might come as a surprise to find that Sweet William chocolate bars are quite delicious. In fact, in blind taste tests less than one percent of those tested could detect a difference between Sweet William chocolate and conventional dairy chocolate. Available from health food stores, some convenience stores and supermarkets. Recommended retail price is $1.95 per bar, but can be found for less in supermarkets.

**For more information contact Dorothy Harding: 02-9361-3144, 0418-240-167.**
**Email: dorothy.harding@villanis.com.au**

# RECENT RELEASES

**Titles described can be ordered through your nearest bookstore.**




## INDIGENOUS

**Don Burke**

Ever wondered about the man himself's backyard? When Don Burke bought his bush block in 1984, it had an ugly brick veneer house on a barren rocky hillside with virtually no soil. The block was cleared of native vegetation, and even the rocks had been taken off and sold. Don said, 'I suppose this was when I discovered the awful bloody minded part of myself', and he began propagating thousands of native plants. The garden today is lush and green, with dams, ponds, waterfalls, old-growth trees filled with native birds, and much perfume and colour. *Indigenous* is both a memoir of Don's career and a practical guide to the peaks and pitfalls of native gardening. There's plenty of how-to, and page after page of lavish colour photos highlighting particular plants of interest, attractive vistas, wildlife, and before and after shots.

**H/b, 169pp, Allen & Unwin, PO Box 8500, Crows Nest 2065. Ph: 02-8425-0100. RRP $49.95.**

## KNOW YOUR BIRDS

**Australia's Most Common Birds**

**Louise Egerton**

This book is perfect for anyone wondering what that particular bird hopping around in their backyard is. It includes both native and nonnative birds so will help readers decipher mynas from blackbirds as well as magpies from pied currawongs. There is a full-page colour photo of each species of bird, plus a one-page blurb. Distinctions between breeds within a species are listed, but not distinguished. This is an easy-to-use guide rather than a scientific work, so the author has not included scientific names and the tone is informative, friendly and anecdotal. Information on each species includes appearance, habits, breeding, diet, habitat, distribution, and a little about their personality, such as foibles, social lives and domestic arrangements. The guide contains over 80 entries and the photos are terrific.

**P/b, 176pp, New Holland, Locked Bag 516, Frenchs Forest 1640. Ph: 02-9975-6799. RRP $24.95.**

## IN PRAISE OF SLOW

**Carl Honoré**

We GRs might call it downshifting rather than slow, but would perhaps agree that 'we are moving from a world in which the big eat the small to one where the fast eat the slow'. When Carl Honoré started buying one-minute fairy tales so reading to his child at night would not use up so much valuable time, he realised his world had become too fast for comfort. He decided to investigate the price of speed and the possibility of going down a gear into a 'slow' frame of mind: calm, deliberate, receptive, intuitive, and based on real and meaningful connections. The book combines well-researched trivia and personal encounters with various advocates of slow living around Europe. There are chapters on slow food, medicine, city living, sex, work, leisure and even bringing up 'slow' (unhurried) children. Although the tone is low key, almost cynical in parts, it adds up to a convincing case. If only one had the time to implement it . . .

**P/b, 310pp, Allen & Unwin, PO Box 8500, Crows Nest 2065. Ph: 02-8425-0100. RRP $29.95.**

## SOAP NATURALLY

**Patrizia Garzena & Marina Tadiello**

The authors claim that anyone who can cook can make soap, once they know how, and this is certainly the book to inspire you to have a go. With more than 300 pages devoted to the hows, wheres and whys of homemade soapmaking, it is more than comprehensive. Topics covered include the history and theory of soap; every possible ingredient, from traditional tallow to wheatgerm oil, as well as scents, colours, 'live' additions and fixatives; soapmaking methods; an enormous number of recipes; details of other skin care products; troubleshooting; soap and the law; and some handy reference tables. Step-by-step photos make the process simple, and the chocolate soap looked good enough to eat.

**P/b, 316pp, Programmer Publishing, 6 Durham St, Mayfield 2304. Ph: 02-6772-0300. RRP $38.50. www.soapnaturally.com**

## THE WHOLE HOG

**Exploring the Extraordinary Potential of Pigs**

**Lyall Watson**

If the antics of Babe altered your perception about pigs, *The Whole Hog* may leave you wanting one of these intelligent, gregarious, sensual creatures. Author and biologist Lyall Watson believes pigs have been misunderstood and the subject of taboo and superstition for far too long. In fact, he says they have more in common with humans than we like to admit. Watson bases his viewpoint on extensive research on wild pigs from Africa, America, Eurasia and islands of the Philippines and Indonesia. He's also looked at domestic breeds and read widely on pig matters. The result of all this is a wealth of facts on every conceivable aspect of pigs, their genetics, history, behaviour, needs, even health, skillfully woven into chapters with names like Hog Heaven, Hogging the Limelight, High on the Hog and When Pigs Fly. *The Whole Hog* is a good read, informative and amusing. It's not going to tell you how to breed and keep pigs, but probably everything else. What can't pigs do? You'll need to read this book to find out.

**H/b, 278pp, Allen & Unwin, PO Box 8500, Crows Nest 2065. Ph: 02-8425-0100. RRP $49.95.**

# DOWN HOME ON THE FARM

by Megg Miller.

The festive break is always a good time to tackle long-ignored jobs and catch up with friends. All that eating and drinking and being merry, it leads to late nights and sleeping in and just the tiniest lack of attention to everyday tasks. Even that is enough for the hungry throng of predators that are watching and waiting to move in and make a killing. Yep, not all the visitors at Christmas were welcome ones and I suspect they're out there now planning their next attack.

What with hawks and foxes, many chooks and chickens have disappeared. The loss of the chicks is particularly annoying. I'd looked after them through some very hot, trying days after the hen succumbed to heat stroke. Fortunately, they were just old enough to survive and, having had lots of TLC lavished on them, the poor little things were plump and healthy and easy prey for the hawk. Still smarting over the unjustness of life in the animal kingdom, I was unimpressed when foxes dug into a couple of pens and took the residents as well as a couple of other hens on eggs and a broody guinea. It's a bad year for foxes; there were cubs everywhere in late spring, and most folk I know with poultry are bemoaning the relentless depredations that are occurring. What's really sad is that the poultry losses are just the tip of the iceberg; you've got to wonder just how many native birds and marsupials are being consumed too. The habitats created for encouraging native fauna multiplication are perfect for lairs and protecting foxes.

It's not been all bad; Christmas was fun. Flora and Dora the sheep fronted up for their annual shearing and are looking cool and smart, and the only bantam I own, a sweet little Modern Game hen, has hatched out her first chick ever. She had made her nest in a safe corner of a shed and, fearing her modest clutch of eggs may have been infertile, I'd removed it and put four standard-sized eggs in from the Faverolles' pen. One hatched after what must have been a difficult setting period; Moderns have bodies not much bigger than magpies and she'd been perched up on her eggs. Henny is underfoot now all the time and the chick is sure to grow up with the nicest of natures. As they're in the shed most of the time, I'm hopeful there will be no predation. What do you bet the chick is a rooster!

I thought these Christmas hols I'd make some inroads on relocating. You'll be aware I've been umming and ahing about the final move for a long time. I'm even tired of fending off enquiries and making excuses. As Suni mentioned last issue, all I've managed to date is half a move. Practical reasons abound, but as well I haven't felt comfortable staying in the renovated cottage. The bed's hot, the room is airless and I've never slept well. When I first bought it the light in one room would come back on even though I'd turned the switch off and there were some odd noises, quite spooky.

I've been lucky enough to host a visit from a previous resident who had moved into the house as a little kid 85 years ago. I'd suspected the place was old, at least parts of it, and this visit confirmed it. The house had started as a two-roomed corrugated shed for sorting and packing apples. It was surrounded by a couple of acres of orchard with old-fashioned varieties of apples like Cox's Pippin plus a few rows of almond trees. It was fascinating learning the history of the place, when front rooms were added, where the toilet and chook pen had been sited, which old shed had housed the cow bail, even where the cow paddock was situated. Clearly, the property had enjoyed a busy lively past with the cottage being a happy home for my gracious visitors, Dad Watson and his son Keith.

Dad Watson had been raised on home-grown vegetables and fruits, eggs from the hens and milk and butter from the Jersey cow. 'Don't go digging around', he cautioned. 'The cow was buried on the farm when she died.' The current front garden was her stamping ground many decades ago, although the shed that housed the milking bail had to be removed because it was unsafe. In the rubble was an old bow, the U-shaped iron that fitted around a bullock's neck and was secured to the wooden yoke. Dad Watson couldn't recall ever having a bullock on the place, but he did remember the trouble his pet magpie caused when it mimicked the cackle of laying hens. Grandma would rush around from her separate cottage to collect the egg and become very cross

Structural shapes like this obelisk have inspired Megg's passion for topiary.

when the nest was empty. To a youngster this was very amusing.

Apparently, Dad Watson moved away when he reached adulthood; he lived in Melbourne, married and was blessed with a son. The family moved back to the apple orchard in the 1950s when Keith was a youngster, and Dad Watson, a builder by trade, carried out numerous renovations on the house. One he initiated was to have the wide, open fireplace in the kitchen with its chains for holding cooking pots replaced by a wood stove and chimney, and windows in the wall. He was chuffed to find his windows still in place, sections of the original corrugated iron still on the external wall and the original brick floor looking well maintained following sealing two years ago. Even the green bath he'd boxed in was still present, though the bathroom has been totally renovated.

It was a unique experience to sit with two generations of a family and listen to their reminiscences and picture the people and events that had taken place in the house or around it. Family members had passed on in it, and it had endured happy and sad times. Grist, believe me, for a devotee of history. I hope my interpretation of the old house and the renovating and furnishing does it justice. Of course, lots of the present furniture and kitchen paraphernalia are family pass-downs, from my parents or their parents. It's a house, or cottage really because it's so small, redolent of the past and other people's lives and I'm pleased I trusted my feelings and resisted the advice lots of people gave to bulldoze it and build a new place.

Suni and Marcel's Chrissie present, a book on topiary, has me itching to spend more time in the garden and to make the most of 'the cow paddock'. I'm going to move beyond the lavender mopheads and box balls and cones and try my hand at creating poultry shapes. Maybe later, even a cow. Perhaps the fun and creative expression of gardening will finally draw me there. Meanwhile, there's writing to do and lots of tidying and cleaning up at the old place. Now, those crumpled up bits of wire netting? Suni would say: 'Out, don't even think about them'. Might they not be handy for shapes for topiary? The pile of tomato stakes, dozens and dozens of them, they will be good for something, surely. Is this the way people relocate, packing up and moving all the workshop material, but keeping it in neater and tidier piles? Don't answer it, we recyclers hoard for a wet day.

## PENPALS

Single Aussie male aged 44, jack of the rat race, seeks country-based penpals for regular correspondence. Having spent all my life in Brisbane, I'm wondering what rural living is like and hoping for enlightenment.

**Tony Crossley,**
**PO Box 420, MT GRAVATT 4122.**
**Email: tonycrossley@yahoo.com**

I am a 77-year-old male, living on a quarter-acre in the Hunter Region and am planning to move to the Lismore area to join my family (when my house sells). I would like penfriends anywhere, any age. My interests are art, sculpture, conservation, organic gardening, cooking, health and everything. My favourite animals are alpacas, horses, dolphins and dogs. Will answer all letters.

**Calvin (GR 167),**
**C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.**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## PROPERTY FOR SALE

### NEW SOUTH WALES

**SOUTH-EAST FORESTS, NSW**, 10 ac, cabin with satellite TV, solar power, wood stove, gas fridge, stove & hot water. Permanent water, Glockemann pump & water tanks, 800 m drip irrigation. Propagation nursery with hothouse, shadehouse & equipment. Outbuildings & estab f/trees. $225,000 ONO. Ph: 02-6493-0484.

**SOUTH COAST NSW** between Nerriga & Braidwood, 104 ac with shed, dam & crk through property. Approximately 2 ac *Lavandula angustifolia* with drip irrigation. Private block 5 km off main rd. $190,000. Ph: 0412-437-118 or 02-4448-6071.

**MID NORTH COAST NSW** (near Forster), secluded 100 ac, 3 sides nat pk, approx 12 ac cleared, lovely 2 bed house, combustion stove, solar power, tanks, sheds, storage container, 2 dams, some fencing, access to wide river frontage. $470,000. Ph: Rod, 0412-825-123.

**BUSH RETREAT/WILDLIFE PARADISE**, 9 ac peaceful self-sufficient lifestyle in beautiful farming valley 20 mins from Casino. $280,000 ONO. Ph: 02-6664-7295, or:
www.sellwithoutagents.com.au/casino02

**BOWERBIRD HOUSE, LAMINGTON PLATEAU**, closest accom to O'Reilly's Resort. Three double b/rs, fully self-cont + granny flat. Views from O'Reilly's to Binna Burra Lodge & Mt Springbrook. $375,000. Ph: 07-5544-0650.

**COONABARABRAN, NSW**, 25 ac, immaculate home, lge shed, & garage/workshop. No water problems – bore & tank, sml well-estab lavender farm, huge tourist potential for horticulture, on major tourist route. Offers between $355,000 & $375,000. Ph: 02-6842-2054. More info: privatelisting.com.au
Also: coonabarabran.com/lavender

### QUEENSLAND

**BOWEN, BEST OF BUSH AND BEACH**, panoramic views, 7½ fertile ac (deceased estate), ex-organic fruit, vegetable, cut flower farm, 2 dams, 2 bores, coldroom, 3-bay shed, 2 unique, eccentric & beautiful dwellings. $425,000. Ph: 07-4785-2456. Email for photos at: benyta.elphinstone@asianaid.org.au

**BAMBOO DREAMING**: 5 ac bamboo garden (49 species, tropical clumping bamboos) on 40 ac, 15 mins from Queensland's most northerly surf beach & gateway to the Great Barrier Reef at Agnes Water/1770. Comfortable 1-2 b/r rustic cottage with ph, power, septic, set up for outdoor living in garden setting. House sites, dams, crk, views. Suit bamboo enthusiast – arts, crafts, timber, tourism or just quiet country living mins from the beach. $345,000. Full details & pictures at www.privatelisting.com.au property ID P12998. Email: anthawk1770@dodo.com.au Ph: 07-4974-9574.

**ILKLEY, SUNSHINE COAST**: 1 ac organic, partial self-suff orchard, surrounded by bush, on NE slope. Two-storey split block home, 5 b/rs, 2 bathrooms & lge timber decks. Double garage & lge rumpus room downstairs. Established gardens. Four km to No 1 highway, 5.6 km to train, 8.6 km to Sunshine Coast University, school bus & only 15 mins to beautiful beaches. Price $450,000. Ph: Neale, 07-5493-6620, 0427-158-694.

### VICTORIA

**GELLIBRAND RIVER FRONTAGE** in beautiful Otways, SW Vic, 100 ac of temperate r/forest with some natural clearings surrounded by state forest. Wallabies, deer & over 400 metres of river frontage. Planning permit for house, power avail. At Devondale, 30 mins to Great Ocean Road & coast, 1 hr to Geelong & 2.5 hrs to Melbourne. Geelong bypass will shorten this time. $125,000. Ph: agent, 03-5595-1102. Email: aegeorgeandsons@bigpond.com.au

**SOUTH-WEST, 15 MINUTES COLAC**, 90 mins Geelong. Quaint 2 b/r mudbrick cottage opposite state forest, 7 ac secluded bush setting, 2 ac native vegetation, plentiful flora & fauna. Olive grove, orchard, blue gum & pine plantations. High r/fall, 90,000 lt tanks, dam. Abundant firewood. Large powered shed with pit. Extensive fencing. Suit wildlife enthusiasts wishing self-suff. $270,000. Ph: Wayne, 0417-556-151.

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### VICTORIA

**EAST GIPPSLAND, WISELEIGH,** near Bruthen, 20 km to Bairnsdale, 10 ac estab organic permaculture farm. Mains or solar power, 3 b/r brick renovated home, gas or combustion stoves, wetback or gas HWS, dishwasher, bungalow, sheds, reticulated water, orchard, dam & crk. Land for Wildlife. Call Sarah, 0427-240-095.

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**ADELAIDE HILLS**: 1 ac vacant land at Marble Hill. Native bush, 25 mins CBD, 15 mins Stirling, 25 mins from Nth Terrace, peaceful, quiet location. Views back to Marble Hill ruins & across valley. Services not avail so would suit solar powered dwelling. Would be ideal for architect/environmentalist/alternative person seeking tranquillity. Ph: owner, 08-8390-3303.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LAND FOR FUTURE SALE**, well situated, water connected, suited for various types of agriculture. For details ph: 0419-919-317.

### TASMANIA

**WOODBRIDGE**: Beautiful 5 ac property 35 mins sth of Hobart, channel district, Tasmania. Superb water views, property completely redeveloped with sustainability values. Excellent r/fall, mild climate, perm stream, dams, 3 fenced paddocks, reveg, windbreaks, organic house, orchard & vegie garden, 5 outbuildings, ring drive, 13,000 gal r/water, lovely 15 square 1900s country home, high ceilings, underground power. Walking distance school, shops, Hobart bus. Offers over $420,000. Ph: 03-6267-4308, or visit: www.ontas.com.au

**CYGNET – 50 MINUTES SOUTH HOBART**: Western red cedar charming 4 b/r cottage on 1¾ ac. Sole home on headland surrounded by well-preserved coastal heath land reserve. Property enjoys Land for Wildlife status. Price $350,000. Ph: 03-6297-8381, 0408-978-381.

## FOR RENT/CARETAKER WANTED

**HOUSE, LAND & QUIET LIFE TO SHARE**: Noosa hinterland, Queensland. Two b/r house & garage on 10 ac, garden & beautiful Ringtail Crk State (eucalypt & r/forest) Forest surrounding. Friendly local towns, nat pk & beaches within 15 mins' drive. Person(s) who appreciate(s) permaculture, quiet living, music, art, crafts, nature, who would enjoy some sharing with neighbours who have these interests are welcome to inquire. $200 p/w, negotiable where maintenance is possible. Photos avail. Contact: 07-5485-3311.
Email: janinejanine@spiderweb.com.au

**DEADLINES: GR 168 – 28 FEBRUARY**
**GR 169 – 28 APRIL**

**BEAUTIFUL BELLINGEN**, 100 ac property 20 mins from town. Comfortable 1 b/r cabin avail with fantastic views for handyman/couple. Reduced rent for property maintenance. Work to include creative projects & clearing, chainsawing. No pets or children. Ph: David/Jodi, 02-6655-1972.

**RUSHWORTH**: 1 b/r bush unit, sep kitchen, dining room, en suite, f/trees & red gum forest. Mature person wanted. All new. $125 p/w. Near to hospital. Ph: 03-9457-2814.

**WANTED** n/s lady to share solar mudbrick on 7 ac Warburton with 50 yr old lady. $90 p/w plus half gas & phone bill. Ph: Lynne, 03-5966-9927.

**CARETAKE/RENTAL** avail (short-term) approx 30 km SW Forster, NSW. Acreage + 2 b/r house, combustion stove, solar power, dam & r/water, phone line. Please ph Sally, 03-9808-8700.

## WANTED TO RENT/ CARETAKE

**TWO HANDYMEN** with a handful of animals searching for a home on acreage to lease with option to buy, NSW/Vic preferred. Excellent references. Ph: Patrick, 02-4884-4133.

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**'GRASS ROOTS' MAGAZINES**, 1 to 163 (excluding 5, 8, 9, 12, 15, 17 – 20, 26, 29). $400 + freight. Ph: 07-4779-3269.

**LOW HEAD MICRO HYDRO TURBINE** for sale: Platypus power unit, will make up to 350 watts from a mere 2-metre or less head, with about 120 lt/second flow. It has a Smart Drive generator and needs some work, but is simple and I'll help with details, site implementation, contacts, specs etc. $2000 ONO. Contact Jeffe at: jeffe@tpg.com.au

**CABIN/STUDIO FOR RELOCATION FAR NORTHERN NSW**: 4 x 7 m, hardwood, on steel track. Suitable concrete footers, easily transported on tilt tray truck. Extras: shower, toilet, kitchen. $17,500. Ph: 02-6677-0229, 0428-367-689.

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Email: outthere@tpg.com.au
Website: www.avalonarchives.com.au

**HOME EDUCATION**, for info send SAE to: Home Education Network, PO Box 461, DAYLESFORD 3460.

**STEINER EDUCATION & HOMESCHOOLING BOOKS**. Alan Whitehead, PO Box 329, BLACKHEATH 2785. Ph: 02-4787-5335. Website: www.users.bigpond.com/goldenbeetlebooks/

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**'NIMBIN NEWS MAGAZINE'**, is a cooperatively run access magazine with articles & information from Nimbin & other areas. We cover concerns relevant to alternative lifestylers & others looking for the most sustainable way. We are one of the longest running alternative magazines & the Nimbin bioregion is at the forefront in the development of sustainable systems. As networkers we scan many mags for suitable & scarce information for our readers. Subscription: 6 issues for $20, sample $3.50. Back copies 5 for $12 posted. PO Box 209, NIMBIN 2480. *Beyond the Rainbow* – literacy mag. Sub: $18 per year for 6 editions. Email: nimbinnews@nrg.com.au

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**'AUSTRALIA'S 12 SACRED PLACES'**: An exploration of Sacred Aboriginality, Geography, History & Modernity – $48. 'CREATIVE HOMESCHOOLING': $28. '33 SACRED SUN SONGS': All-original, all-Australian – $18. Details: www.sacredplaces.com.au Ph: 02-4787-5335, or ask at your local library.

**'NATIVE STINGLESS BEES'** for profit or pleasure – how to get started, pollination/honey potential in Qld. Detailed info booklets, packed with photographs, diagrams. For free catalogue, send name, address & 50 c stamp to: ANBRC, Box 74-G4, NORTH RICHMOND, NSW 2754.

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**FOWLERS NO 2 BOTTLING OUTFIT** with thermometer, instruction books, clips, s/s lids, over 100 bottles incl some Agee. $125 + freight. Kerosene refrigerator, needs new door seal, can be converted to gas for $260. $50 at Peterborough, SA. Contact Ross after dark, ph: 08-8663-2437.

**PLACING AN AD?**
*See page 75 for details*

**STONEGROUND FLOUR** in-home, with a SCHNITZER German quality hand or electric stone mill, 6 models from $178. SCHNITZER MILLS, 420 Freemantle Rd, BATHURST 2795. Ph: 02-6336-9100.
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**GR 169 – 28 APRIL**

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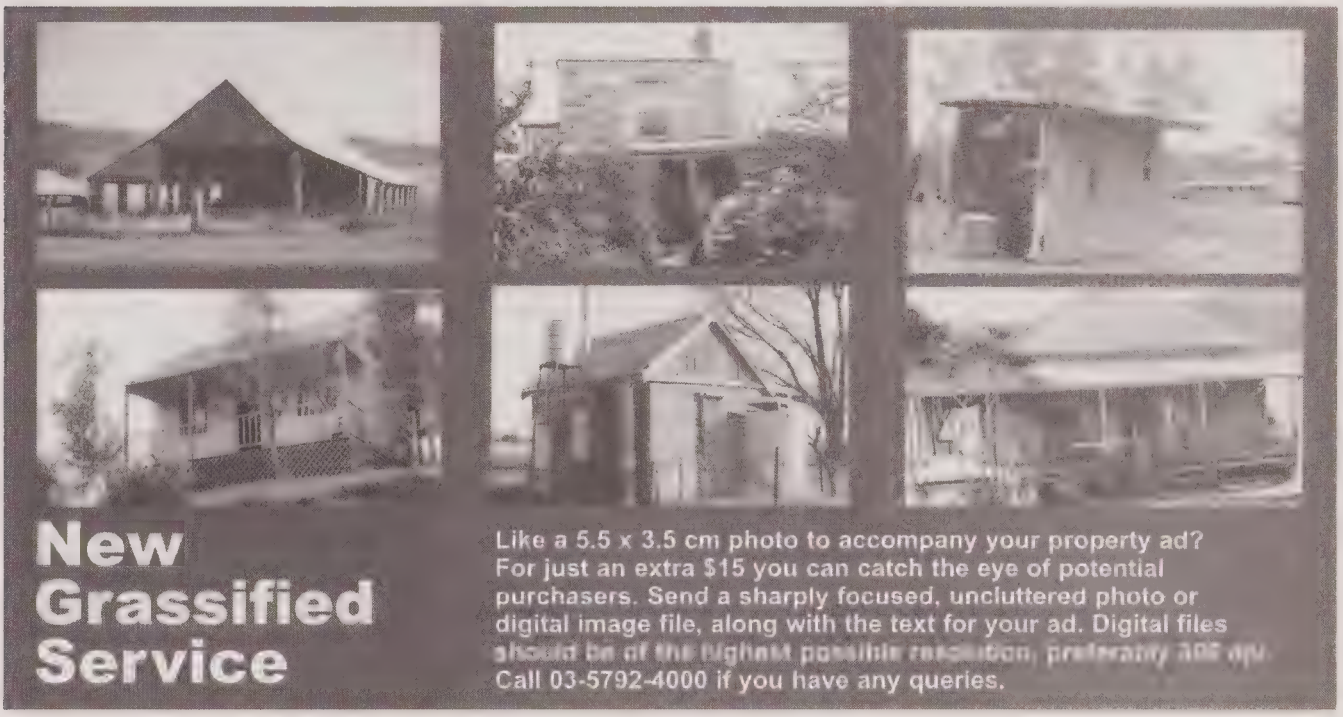
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**CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAMS**: Aromatherapy Dip, Vitamin & Nutrition Therapy Dip, Animal Therapies (The Green Vet), Herbal Therapies, Folk Medicine, Psychic Healing, Celtic Wicca, Psychic Development. Free brochure from: Wiccan Home Studies (estab 25 yrs), The Friendly School, PO Box 138, SURRY HILLS 2010. Ph: 02-9319-6166. Email: owlhome@ozemail.com.au

**PERMACULTURE COURSES 2005**, Bega Valley, NSW, cool to warm temperate, southeastern Australia. DESIGN CERTIFICATE 3 – 14 June with Hugh Gravestein, Darren Doherty & John Champagne. Weekend Introduction Courses, 19 & 20 March; 14 & 15 May and 5 & 6 November. Call John, 02-6492-7306, or email: champagne@acr.net.au

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**PERMACULTURE VISIONS:** Leaders in permaculture learning online. Students in 23 countries: from Alaska to outback Australia. Ask online today. Time to grow.
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**PLEASE NOTE**
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**HIGHLANDS ARTS EXPERIENCE**: Highlands Arts will be holding its annual Art Exhibition on the weekend of 5 & 6 March 2005 in the Highlands Community Hall. As well as arts & crafts on display there will be entertainment & refreshments. The newly opened & unique Spiteri Studio Gallery will also be open to entrants. Times: Saturday 10am to 9pm, Sunday 10am to 4pm. Address: cnr Ghin Ghin & Highlands Rds, HIGHLANDS (VicRoads Map 61). Come & enjoy a great experience in the midst of beautiful scenery. Enquiries: Stuart, 03-5796-9358.

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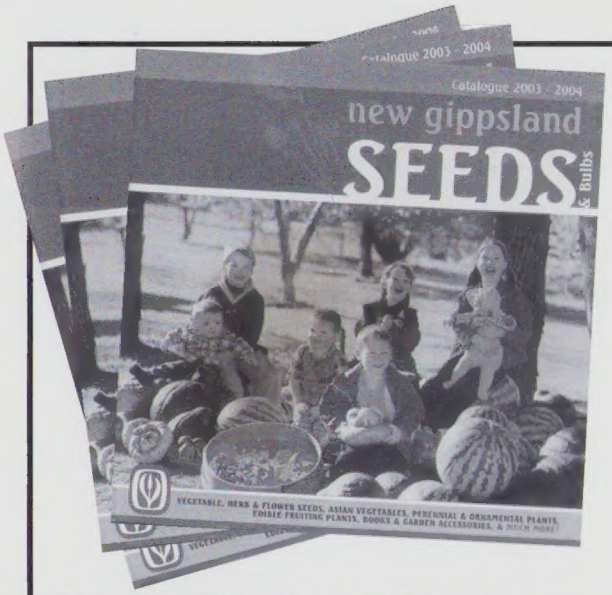


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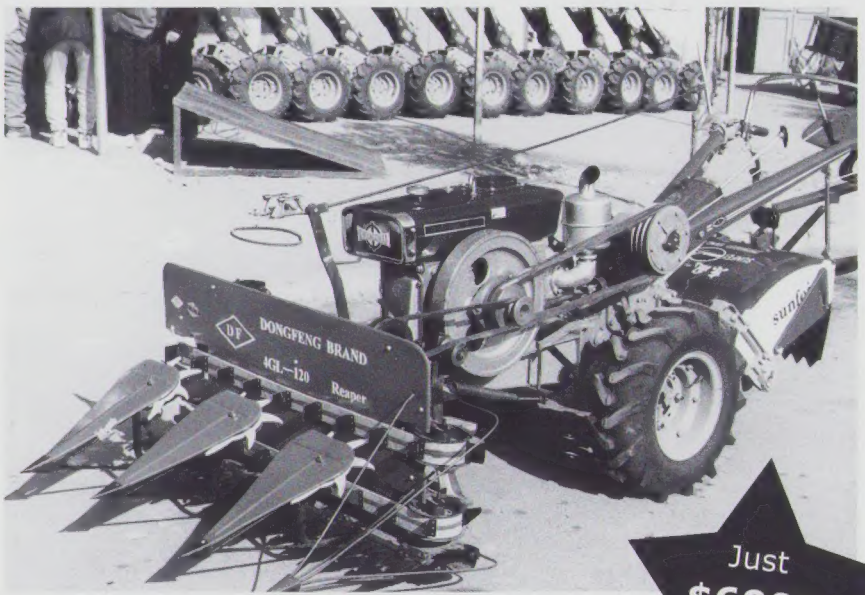
- Generator (your tractor will double as generator)
- Pump (use your tractor for pumping water for irrigation)
- Hiller (for making beds)
- Ditcher for digging ditches about 110 cm wide and up to 300 cm deep (suitable for laying pipe etc)

**This will be the most useful piece of machinery you will have on the farm – it will pay for itself in no time.**




Just **$6000** plus GST

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ISSN 0310-2890
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